

**JOURNAL
OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
NIGERIA**



Volume 2 No. 2

December 1961

JOURNAL OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NIGERIA

PRINTED AT THE
IBADAN UNIVERSITY PRESS
NIGERIA, APRIL 1962

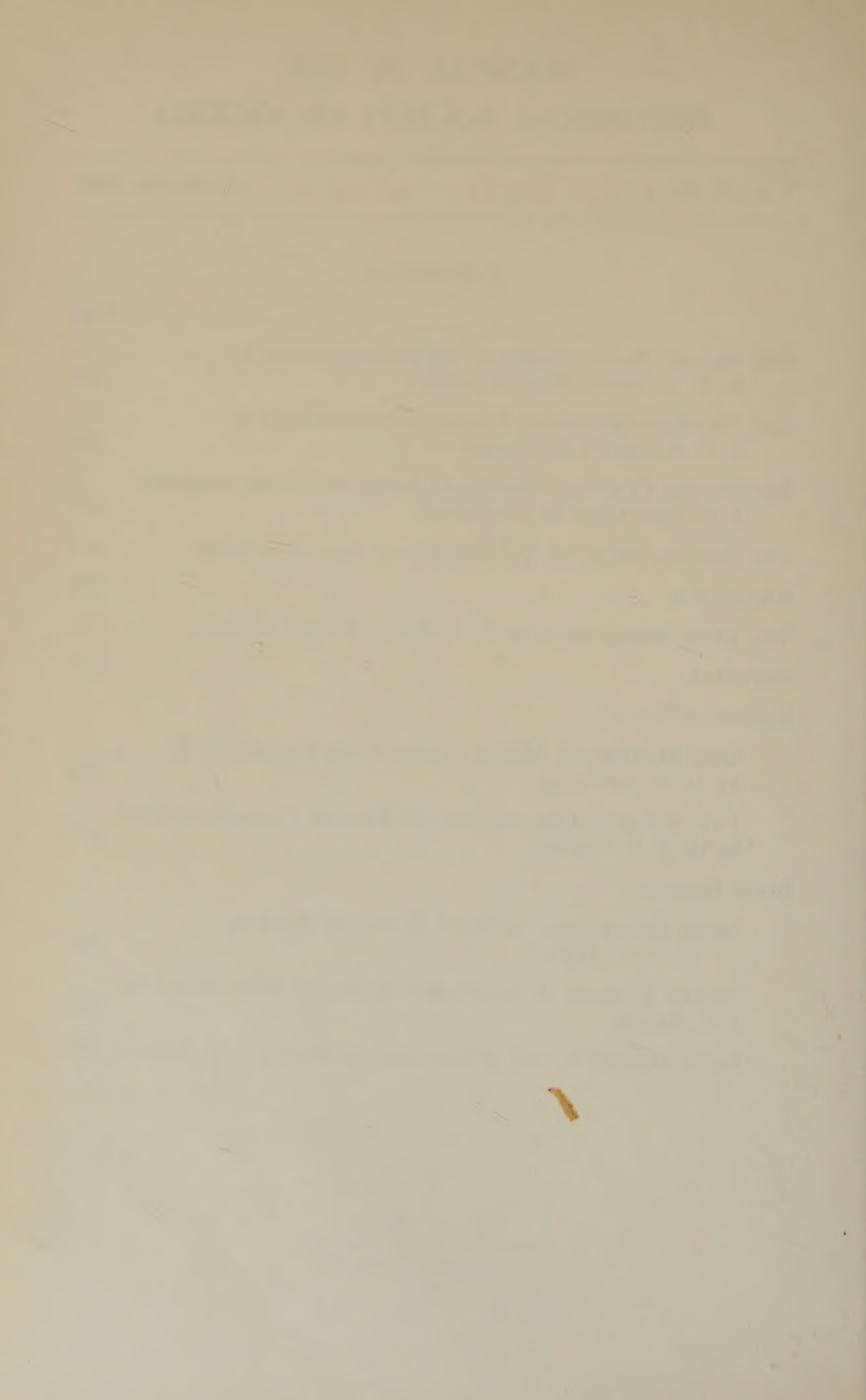
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A NEGLECTED THEME OF WEST AFRICAN HISTORY: THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

by

H. F. C. SMITH

This article, with minor amendments, is the text of a paper delivered at the Leverhulme History Conference held in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, in September 1960, and is published here by permission of the Leverhulme Trust.

THE study of West African history in recent times has produced a number of themes for the 19th century which are now already being written up in detail, or for which extensive material exists in European archives. The best known of these themes are those which have to do with the enormous increase of European activity in the region during the period. Very recently a movement to reconsider the century from the African point of view with basic concentration on change in African institutions and the significance of African personalities has, indeed, arisen. But even so, the 19th century in West Africa, be it written up from the European or from the African point of view, continues, in the presentation of 20th century research, to be closely tied to the general theme of the growth of European influence. The Partition of Africa dominates the century, and the implication is that the significant force for change in this period was the activity of the Europeans to which the indigenous peoples reacted. The great practical pre-occupation of the present day with problems arising from European domination in West Africa, moreover, reinforces the importance attached to the historical development of European influence.

The wealth of writing which has appeared on this type of theme in the last 75 years, however, should not lead us to exaggerate its significance in the general picture of West African history. Pre-occupation with the origin of present day problems which affect all parts of West Africa can result in the fallacy of reading back into the earlier part of the 19th century conditions which, for large areas of the region, did not arise until its end. The fact is that the real conflict between African and European institutions was hardly felt anywhere in West Africa more than 200 miles from the coast before the 1880's. This leaves an area of nearly 700,000 square miles southward of the latitude of lake Chad unaccounted for during the greater part of the 19th century in so far as the 'European influence' type of theme is

concerned. This vast tract of savannah land, while not entirely cut off from the outside world, continued indeed to live its own life quite untroubled by European influence until it was conquered in the last twenty years of the century.¹

The history of the West African savannah in the 19th century has its own independent theme; and this consists in a series of revolutionary movements which radically changed the social and political complexion of the whole zone during the hundred years or so before the establishment of the European governments. These movements were *jihāds* resulting in the formation of Islamic states, the emergence of a new West African Muslim aristocracy, and widespread conversion to Islam. That this period was one of Islamic revolution in West Africa is, in fact, well-known. A fair body of information concerning the movements connected with the names of Shehu dan Fodio, Seku Ahmadu, and al-Ḥājj 'Umar is readily available, and the story has captured the imagination of local chroniclers and administrators. But it has not yet attracted the attention of present-day professional historians. The resources of modern scientific historical research have not been brought to bear on the subject,² with the result that very little has yet been done to recover and study the vast amount of poorly publicised source material which exists on it; and even the well-known material is not properly organised.³

Research into this subject has been hindered by certain difficulties in it which arise for modern scholarship. It involves work with oral tradition in a variety of languages, often preserved in places remote from present-day centres of learning. It again involves the recovery of a large stock of written documents which are mostly in Arabic, and also are widely dispersed throughout the region, often in private

¹ Already before the beginning of the 19th century European cloth, hardware, etc., had been finding its way into the savannah-land markets from the coast. But this trade did not constitute a force for change during the greater part of the century. Only the trade in fire-arms was of limited and indirect significance in this respect. Fire-arms imported from the coast played an important role in the campaigns of al-Ḥājj 'Umar. But such weapons were not used to any significant extent in the other *jihāds*.

² Working specifically on the 19th century material at present we have only Amadou Hampate Ba of the IFAN (on oral tradition of the Macina), M. Hiskett of the Kano School for Arabic Studies (on Sokoto *jihad* literature) and M. G. Smith of the University of California at Los Angeles (on Hausa constitutional material). J. S. Trimmingham of Glasgow and J. Abun-Nasr of Oxford are also utilising some of the material, but only as a part of wider studies in which they are engaged (i.e. the general history of Islam in West Africa and the history of the Tijaniyya). A. D. H. Bivar of London is making a specialised study of chancery practice in the Emirate governments of Nigeria.

³ One result of the subsequent division of the savannah-lands into French and British colonial areas has been to confine research behind frontiers which were transcended by the movements in question. This has obscured the general pattern and the essentially inter-connected nature of the movements, and has therefore distorted our view of them.

hands. Generally speaking also, the region concerned is the part of West Africa least affected by modern ideas of research in the humanities and is itself producing few historians of the "scientific" type at present. All this has tended to keep the study in comparative neglect.¹

My aim here is to draw attention to some of the things which, in the present state of research, can generally be said about the nature of these movements and their significance, and to indicate the gaps in our knowledge. I shall conclude with some discussion of the source material which remains to be recovered.

Social and Political Conditions preceding the Jihads

By the latter part of the 18th century Islam in one form or another had existed in various parts of the Western Sudan north of the tropical forest for a very long time. It had first come across the desert from North Africa in the early years of the Hijra, and had subsequently undergone several waves of re-inforcement in the region, first by the efforts of the Berber Almoravids in alliance with Negroes of the Senegal valley in the 11th century, and again down roughly to the end of the 16th century by a series of imperial movements conducted by the Mandingo, Songhai and Kanembu peoples. From early times also trading connections with North Africa and Egypt, together with the pilgrimage, provided a continual source of refreshment for Islam in the Western Sudan. At the same time spread of the religion in the region was greatly aided by the activities of various itinerant Sudanese peoples, such as some sections of the nomadic Fulani, and Mandingo and Hausa traders. Broadly speaking the Islam which developed was of two types. There was the politico-religious Islam of communities living under governments which enforced the Malikite *sharī'a* or an approximation to it. Such communities had been the aristocracies of the medieval empires. Secondly, there was the private, non-political Islam of Muslim communities living in pagan states or under nominally Muslim rulers who did not enforce the *sharī'a*.

In 1750 Islam of the politico-religious type existed in very few places in the Western Sudan. Elements of it were no doubt present among some of the Berber and Arab nomads of the north-west edge of the region, and in the metropolitan area of Bornu. It was in the process of being established in the Futa Jallon. But elsewhere in the region government was in the hands of pagan powers such as the Bambara, certain sections of the Fulani, the Mossi, etc., or of nominally Muslim powers who condoned paganism such as the Hausa and the Ullimiden Tuareg. At the same time politically powerless Muslim communities of Tukolor, Fulani, Soninke, Malinke, Songhai, Hausa, etc. (some conserving ancient traditions of Islamisation) were very

¹ Thus out of fourteen papers on 19th century West Africa presented to the international conference on African history and archaeology held in the SOAS, London, in 1957, only one was on the Islamic revolutions.

widely dispersed among the pagan peoples from one end of the region to the other.

This was an essentially unstable condition of society, for there were many possible sources of tension between the Muslim communities and their pagan overlords and neighbours. Life in pagan states had many disadvantages for the Muslim. It was likely, for example to involve the payment of uncanonical tribute.¹ It might also mean fighting for the pagan ruler against foreign Muslims.² The position was frustrating for the Muslims were generally conscious of being culturally much superior to the pagans. Their religion, of course, left them in no doubt about this, and on the practical level they were likely to be superior citizens, knowing much more about the world than did the pagans, and conserving a vital monopoly of literacy. Pagan rulers indeed were sometimes wont to exploit the talents of their Muslim subjects for their own ends, and when this was done the possibilities of tension were often increased.³ There was every chance of Muslims' developing into over-mighty subjects in pagan states. Pagan rulers needed their services, but, at the same time, feared them because of their superior magic.⁴ Realising that Islam was a proselytising religion, they also sometimes feared to be engulfed in a tide of conversion which would subvert their position in society.⁵ Consciousness of superiority and frustration on the one side, and distrust and fear on the other were not only common conditions of relationship between Muslims and pagans; they were also present in relations between learned Muslim subjects and less learned or nominally Muslim rulers.⁶

¹ The exactions practised by the Hausa rulers, for example, are enumerated in Usuman dan Fodio, *Kitab al farq bayn wilayat ahl al-kufr fi wilayatihim wa wilayat ahl al-islam fi wilayatihim* (ed. and trans. Hiskett, Bull. SOAS. XXIII, 3, 1960).

² cf. the difficult position of Muhammad al-Ghamba, head of the Muslim community in Kumasi at the beginning of the 19th century (Dupuis, *Journal of a residence in Ashanti*, London, 1824). The general position of the Muslims in Ashanti is developed in I. Wilks. *The Northern Factor in Ashanti History*, (Institute of African Studies in the University College of Ghana, 1961).

³ Thus the Shehu Usuman dan Fodio was employed as a tutor to the son of Bawa dan Gworzo, a Hausa ruler who did not enforce the *shari'a*. Afonja, pagan chief of Ilorin in Yoruba, employed the mallam Alimi ('Abd al-'Azim) as a 'priest' (S. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p. 193).

⁴ Respect for Islamic 'magic' accounted partly for the awe in which the Askia Muhammad b. Abi Bakr had been held (J. Rouch, *Contribution à l'histoire des Songhay*, IFAN, 1954). Pagan Fulani of the Futa Toro feared it (Sire-Abbas-Soh, in RMM, XXV, 1913, p. 194). Al-Hajj 'Umar profited from the sale of amulets in his early days (Mage, *Voyage dans Le Soudan Occidental*, Paris, 1868, p. 233). Muslim amulets (*hujub*) are, of course, highly valued by pagans at the present time.

⁵ Thus in the 1790's Nafata, ruler of Gobir in Hausa, forbade further conversions (Muhammad Bello, *Infak al-Maysur*, ed. as *Infak'ul Maisuri* by C. J. Whitting, London, 1951).

⁶ There was an element of this even in Bornu in the late 18th century. There the learned Falata mallam Muhammad al-Tahir b. Ibrahim gained such an ascen-

The situation was made worse by the fact that Muslim communities were often of foreign origin and defied assimilation into pagan society not only on religious grounds, but also because of differences of language and traditions.

In such conditions the catalyst of violent reaction by devout Muslims against the society in which they lived, was powerful leadership. It was easy for anyone learned in the *sharī'a* to show that a position of political and social subordination for proper Muslims in pagan or nominally Islamised areas could not be tolerated. There was a clear canonical obligation, not only of flight (*hijra*) from the country of the pagans (*dār al-harb*) but also of *jihād* against pagans who were oppressors (*zālimīn*).¹ Wherever a leader of exceptional personality appeared who could point out these things with sufficient force, rebellion was likely to occur, and from this it would be an easy step to large-scale campaigning for the conversion of pagans. In due course the necessary leaders did in fact appear.

The early Risings

The first example of what was later to happen on an enormous scale is provided in the rise of the Fulani Alfa Ibrahima bi Nuhu and his followers among the pagan Mandingo of the Futa Jallon hills.² There as early as 1725 the tension between an immigrant Muslim community and the indigenous pagans had reached breaking point. During the course of the 17th century Fulani pastoralists had moved into the area from the Niger valley bringing Islam with them. Frustrations and difficulties in the foreign pagan environment had followed, and eventually the preachings of the learned Ibrahima had raised the *jihād*. From the fighting which then ensued there emerged a Muslim government with its headquarters at Timbo: the Imamate of the Futa Jallon.

Within a few years of this rising a similar situation developed in Futa Toro between the Senegal and Ferlo rivers.³ Here the tension was between the earlier inhabitants (Torobbe) who had a tradition of ancient Islamisation, and a ruling class of pagan Fulani (Denyan-kobe). In the mid-18th century life had become very insecure in this region as a result of the annual pillaging of the country by the Fulani clans in the course of their internal quarrels, a situation made worse

dancy over the Mai that the latter through fear eventually forbade him the court (*Ibid.* Also: Muhammad al-Tahir b. Ibrahim, *Qasida al-bab al-masduḍ & Qasida "fani-fani"* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, uncatalogued).

¹ These were the classical terms used by the leaders.

² See, e.g. J. Arcin, *Histoire de la Guinée française, Rivières du Sud, Fouta Djallon, région sud du Soudan* (Paris, 1911). P. Marty, *L'Islam en Guinée Fouta Djallon* (Paris, 1921). M. Saint-Père, *Création du royaume du Fouta Djallon* (Ann. & Mem. CESAOF, 1916). Tauxier, L., *Mœurs et Histoire des Peuls* (Paris, 1937).

³ See, e.g. Sire-Abbas-Soh etc. (trans. M. Delafosse and H. Gaden), *Chroniques*

by Moorish raids from the Senegal valley. In these conditions there appeared the Shaykh Sulayman Bal, who assumed leadership of the Torobbe, inspired it seems by recent events in the Futa Jallon where he had received his religious instruction. *Jihād* began against the Fulani and the Moors in c.1769, and in 1775 the ruling dynasty was overthrown to be replaced by a line of Torodo imams of whom the first was 'Abd al-Qadir bi Hammadi.

These two movements represent typical reactions in the type of situation described above, and the general pattern which they followed is repeated elsewhere several times in the course of the next hundred years. The significance of the Imamates is mainly that they effected a social revolution in their area by the overthrow of the old ruling classes and the establishment of a new aristocracy. They also achieved some appreciable conversion to Islam. At the same time neither of them ever achieved great political power, and their history was one of continual instability until they were finally destroyed by the French at the end of the century. Again, although the rising in the Futa Toro was certainly known to leaders in Sokoto nearly 1,500 miles away¹ neither of the movements seems to have had any important international repercussions.²

The great Jihads of the 13th Century A.H.

It was with the opening of the new century that the large-scale movements were to appear. Among learned Muslims of the Western Sudan the 13th century A.H. had long been the subject of prophesy connected with the coming of a great *mujaddid* who would reign as Caliph of Takrur.³ By the beginning of the century in 1784 the unsatisfactory situation of Muslim communities in many parts of the region was calculated to raise such expectations in an urgent fashion.

(a) *Usuman dan Fodio*

Tension was first to break in the Hausa lands and adjacent territories. Here, Fulanin Gida (sedentary Fulani) had for several centuries been settled under Hausa governments which, though sometimes Muslim in name did not normally enforce the *shari'a*.⁴ Outside the metropolitan areas indeed, the Fulani were in places settled among Hausa

du Fouta Senegalais, (RMM, XXIV & XXV, 1913). Abdoulaye Kane, *Histoire et origine de familles du Fouta Toro* (Ann. & Mem. CESHAF, 1916).

¹ Muhammad Bello, *op. cit.*

² Further work remains to be done on these movements. There is, for example, much unstudied material preserved by the IFAN, Dakar: Arabic documents collected by the Commandant Vieillard in the Futa Jallon; writings of Shaykh Musa Kamara on the Futa Toro.

³ Mahmoud Kati etc., *Tarikh el-Fettach* (trans. Houdas & Delafosse, Paris 1913), p. 127.

⁴ Usuman dan Fodio, *op. cit.* and Muhammad Bello, *Bayan al-bida 'al-shaytaniya*.

subjects who were quite untouched by Islam (Maguzawa). Immediately southward of the Hausa speaking area, from Borgu to the Gongola valley and the Upper Benue, Fulanin Gida also settled among a great diversity of purely pagan peoples.

The situation in these parts was brought to a head by the emergence of a remarkable group of Fulani leaders in the Hausa state of Gobir. There the Shehu Usman dan Fodio (d.1817), supported by his brother Abdullahi (d.1829) and his son Muhammad Bello (d. 1837), called for *hijra* in 1804. *Jihād* followed, and the rebellion was accompanied by risings under local Fulani leadership throughout the region described above.¹ By 1831 this movement had resulted in the establishment of some fifteen Muslim emirates controlling a total area of some 180,000 square miles, and owing allegiance to an *amīr al-mu'minīn* in the newly founded town of Sokoto.

Here was political revolution on a remarkable scale. But the movement represented much more than the attempt of a few under-privileged and determined men to seize political power for their own benefit. In origin it was also an important intellectual movement, involving in the minds of the leaders a conception of the ideal society and a philosophy of revolution. This intellectual aspect has been entirely neglected in the past, and attention is only just now beginning to be paid to it.² The indications are, however, that the real significance of the movement cannot be understood unless emphasis is laid on this aspect. Indeed, perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of the leaders was the extent of their learning. The Shehu Usman dan Fodio and his two chief supporters were extraordinarily well read in Arabic literature. Masters of the classical tongue which they had learned in their youth, they all possessed a vast fund of Quranic knowledge, and were in addition particularly well-informed in Traditions, Law and rhetoric. They had also studied classical Islamic history. Besides the Quran and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhari the texts which they knew were mainly, though not entirely, the writings of North Africa, Egypt and Syria of the 6th century A.H. and later, and it was chiefly through them that their knowledge of earlier writings came. The breadth of their knowledge of Arabic writing is particularly remarkable when it is realised that none of them ever visited North Africa or the Middle East. This suggests that facilities

¹ No good general introductory account of the *jihād* exists. For a brief sketch of the risings involved see S. J. Hogben, *The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria* (Oxford, 1930). See also the following important contemporary accounts: 'Abdullahi dan Fodio, *Taziyin al-Waraqat* (ed. with trans. and notes M. Hiskett, Ibadan & Kaduna, forthcoming. Incomplete trans. and notes A. Brass in *Der Islam*, X, 1920). Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur* (ed. Whitting, *op.cit.*,). Incomplete trans. of Hausa version E. J. Arnett, *Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, Kano, 1922).

² Hiskett, *ibid.*, introduction. Also M. Hiskett, *Material relating to the state of learning among the Fulani before their jihād* (Bull. SOAS, 1957, XIX, 3).

for Islamic education in the Western Sudan were far more advanced in the 18th century than is usually believed.¹ It is clear that there must have existed an important class of 'ulama' who were significant preservers and teachers of Islamic learning, though they did not, before the jihads occupy positions of political importance. The system of *shaykh* and *tālib*, of 'master-seeking', of itinerant teachers, seems to have been well established, and from time to time produced great scholars. It was from his *shaykhs*, Jibril b. 'Umar and 'Uthmān Binduri, that the Shehu dan Fodio derived the learning which he brought to bear on the social problems of the Hausa states. This learning of the leaders showed itself in their writings which were voluminous. The astonishing total of 258 books and pamphlets is at present provisionally attributed to the triumvirate, and this is probably not a complete list.² These writings cover a very wide range of subjects including all the classical Islamic sciences, as well as history, mysticism and medicine. In addition they wrote a considerable amount of poetry.³ This literary output is particularly noteworthy when it is remembered that a large number of these books were written in the midst of active campaigning, and that they do not include official correspondence which the leaders (especially Muhammad Bello) had to keep up with their supporters in the field. The aim of all this writing was educational; to train emirs, qadis and mu'allams by explanation of the type of society which the reformers wished to see established. No survey of all this literature has yet been attempted, but this is an urgent necessity if a proper assessment of the nature of the movement is to be made.⁴

At present it is possible to say that in outline the thought of the leaders followed a classical pattern of Islamic revivalism. In their search for the ideal society and the just ruler (*al-imām al-'adl*), they looked back to a previous golden age in the history of dār al-islām, and their aim was to re-create in the Western Sudan the society of the

¹ Hiskett. *Material*...

² The titles are given in W. Kensdale, *Field notes on the Arabic literature of the Western Sudan* (Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc., 3 & 4, 1955, 1 & 2, 1956 and 1 & 2, 1958). Also H. F. C. Smith, *Source material for the history of the Western Sudan* (Jour. Hist. Soc. Nigeria, 1, 3, 1958) and *A list of Books written by Muhammad Bello* (Hist. Soc. Nigeria, Bull. of News, III, 4, Suppl., 1959).

³ Abdullahi dan Fodio in particular was a distinguished classical poet (Hiskett. *Tazyin*...).

⁴ It is hard to agree with J. S. Trimingham (*Islam in West Africa*, Oxford, 1959, pp. 49, 82 etc.) that these leaders were poor scholars because, for example, they knew only law and no dialectical theology. Usman dan Fodio well knew the difference between *naql* and 'aql (Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur*), and he actually wrote two tracts entitled *Al-farq bayn 'ilm al-tawhid wa 'ilm al-kalam* and *Al-farq bayn 'ilm usul al-din wa 'ilm al-kalam* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/79). Neither can we follow him in dismissing them as 'copious compilers' only. Their historical works, their poems, their sermons, their political correspondence, all place them in a category far above this. (cf. T. Hodgkin in *West Africa*, London, 2178, March, 1959).

Rightly-guided Caliphate.¹ Usuman dan Fodio considered himself to be in much the same position with regard to the reform of Sudanese society as had been the Askia Muhammad b. Abi Bakr three centuries before,² and all three leaders paid great attention to the writings of the Askia's legal advisor Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Maghili. This latter, indeed, who appeared in the Sudan from Tuat at the end of the 15th century, seems to have exerted an important and lasting influence on learned Muslim opinion in this region, particularly on the side of politics (*siyāsa*).³ In law the leaders accepted the Malikite interpretation of the sources, and laid great stress on the observance of its details, showing in this emphasis their reaction to the uncertainties of Hausa customary government. At every stage their revolutionary activity was to be strictly regulated by reference to classical authority. The revival of primitive religion and the prevention of deviations from orthodoxy were the bases of the whole movement.⁴ Another aspect of their thought lay in their attachment to the brotherhood of the Qadiriyya. This *tarīqa* had, of course, been known in the Sudan for a long time, having, it is said, been introduced there by Muhammad al-Maghili.⁵ In the second half of the 18th century also, Qadiri practices were being disseminated in the region of the great bend of the Niger by the pious and learned Mukhtār b. Aḥmad, shaykh of the Kenata nomads, who was well respected by the Sokoto 'ulama'.⁶ Al-Mukhtār, however, was not properly speaking one of the Shehu's teachers, the latter's *silṣila* being given as: Jibril b. 'Umar—Muhammad Murtaḍa al-Hussayni al-Wasīṭi—Muhyi al-Dīn b. 'Abdallah al-Hussayni—Sa'd Allah b. Muhammad al-Ḥasani—Ibn 'Atta Allah al-Iskandari—Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Anṣārī—Abu al-Hasan al-Shādhili—'Abd al-Salām b. Mashish—Jār al-Muṣṭafa—Shu'ayb—'Ali b. Hawz—Abū Ya'aza—'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylāni.⁷ The Shehu practised the *wird*, and conferred it, and it clearly played an important role in his personal life. A general spread of Qadiri practices in the Hausa lands also resulted from the move-

¹ Several histories of the *rashidin* Caliphs appear among their writings.

² Asserted in the Bello-Kanemi correspondence (*Infāq al-Maysur*).

³ He wrote an interesting 'Mirror for Princes' addressed, it is claimed, to the Sarkin Kano Muhammad Runfa (*Taj al-dīn fima yajib 'ala al-muluk*, ed. and trans. T. H. Baldwin, Beirut, 1932). The *fatawi* pronounced by him for the Askia Muhammad b. Abi Bakr became very well known in the Western Sudan, and were often quoted in the *jihad* literature.

⁴ *Ihya' al-sunna wa ikhmad al-bid'a* is the title of one of the Shehu's longest works (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/55). The degree of reliance on authority in the actual process of revolution is shown in the Shehu's *Bayan wujub al-hijra 'ala al-'ubbad*, a handbook for *mujahidin* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/53).

⁵ See e.g. Marty, P., *Etudes sur l'Islam et les tribus du Soudan* Paris, 1819, Vol. 1, pp.20-1).

⁶ For his writings and some discussion of his influence see I. Hamet, *Littérature arabe saharienne*, RMM, Oct & Nov., 1910).

⁷ Usuman dan Fodio, *Al-silasil al-qadiriyya* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/110).

ment. But the actual role which the *tarīqa* played in the revolution is a matter which has not been studied at all.

Turning from the question of the cultural quality of the movement to that of the subsequent history of the emirates, we also find that though the story is very significant many questions yet remain unanswered. It is known that government was by a new and permanently established Fulani aristocracy operating a more or less standard Islamised form of the old Hausa city administrations which was extended to non-Hausa-speaking areas. This structure remained more or less intact until the coming of the British. The latter, indeed, were unable to dispense with it, and it has actually continued to form the framework of local administration in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria down to the present day. It is also known that the political and social structure of the emirates was the vehicle for considerable spread of Islam in the area. The complexion of society in Northern Nigeria today indeed continues to be basically determined by influences originating in the 19th century *jihād*. At the same time the gaps in the historical record are numerous. Important subjects of study are: the precise way in which the position of the *amīr al-mu'minīn* developed vis-à-vis the emirates; the degree to which the Maliki *sharī'a* continued to be enforced down to 1903; the way in which the day to day administration worked; the detail of the military organisation; the details of the economy of the confederation; and so on. The most frequently expressed opinion is that the various governments quickly threw off all real allegiance to Sokoto, and deteriorated into inefficient tyranny kept in place mainly by the profits of the slave trade.¹ But this opinion has never been based on a critical survey of sources, and cannot nowadays be accepted. The archives of the emirates which were considerable in volume², and are in part preserved, have never been studied. Neither has there been a systematic investigation of oral tradition relating to the second half of the 19th century.³

A third aspect of this *jihād* which has not yet received the attention due to it concerns the repercussions which the movement had in West Africa generally. Its influence was in fact felt far beyond the frontiers of the emirates. In the ancient Muslim state of Bornu, sympathetic risings of the Falata, though they did not result in the establishment of a Fulani emirate, did precipitate a revolution which ended the rule of the most venerable dynasty in the whole Sudan, and occasioned the emergence of the Shehu Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Kānemi. This latter was himself a learned Muslim reformer, though of rather a different type from the fiery *mujāhidīn* of Sokoto. This story is all well enough

¹ cf. all British administrative opinion. Also O. Houdas in *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera* (Estudios de Erudición oriental, Zaragoza), p.121-2. More recently Trimingham, *op.cit.* p. 142.

² One important result of the *jihad* was to make Arabic the administrative language over a wide area.

³ The current work of M. G. Smith however is a beginning in this direction.

known in outline, but the details of it have not been published, as no complete study of the extant documents has yet been made.¹ Similarly obscure are the details of the effect which the establishment of the Fulani emirate of Ilorin had on the already declining fortunes of the Yoruba empire of Oyo.² Perhaps most important of all under this head, however, was the influence which the Sokoto leaders exerted on later *jihād* movements in other parts of the Sudan.

(b) *Seku Ahmadu*

The second of the great 13th century *jihāds* took place in Macina astride the Upper Niger and Bani rivers. This was another area of tension where Muslim Fulani, Soninke and Songhai lived among pagan Fulani, Bozo and Bambara. The government, vassal of the Bambara state of Segu, was generally speaking pagan also (though some Ardos of the 18th century had Muslim names), and the northern part of the region was exposed to the raids of the irreligious Tuareg. In this situation there appeared the Fulani reformer Ahmadu bi Hammadi (d. 1843) who raised the *jihād* in 1818.³ *Hijra* was accomplished to a new capital east of the Bani (Hamdullahi); the pagan government of the Macina was overthrown, and an *imāma* of five emirates under an *amīr al-mu'minīn* established, covering an area of some 56,000 square miles. This movement thus repeated the standard pattern of development, though it was on a much smaller scale than that of Sokoto, and was much more centralised.

As to the intellectual side of the movement, the following appear to have been the main sources of inspiration. Seku Ahmadu grew up in a region where during the time of his youth (b.1775 or 6) pious opinion was undoubtedly being affected by the teachings of al-Mukhtār b. Aḥmad Al-Kuntī, and the *wird* of the Qadiriyya most probably came to him from this source. At the same time he was in contact with the '*ulama*' of Jenné, an ancient centre of Islam. But his greatest debt was clearly to Sokoto.⁴ He regarded the Shehu dan Fodio as his example, and consulted him on the timing of the Macina *jihād*. He also appears to have had difficulty in carrying his council of mallams with him until he could quote the authority of the Sokoto books. This authority included, of course, the famous *fatāwi* of

See his *Government in Zazzau* (Oxford, 1960).

¹ Summary in Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire de Bornou* (IFAN, 1949). No attention at all has been paid to the writings of Muhammad al-Amin al-kanemi other than a fragment of his correspondence with Sokoto.

² Summary in Johnson, *op.cit.*

³ For an introductory account see C. Monteil, *Monographie de Jenné* (Tulle, 1903) which is followed by M. Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, vol. II. (Paris, 1912). See also R. Caille, *Journal d'un voyage à Tombouctou et à Jenné*, vol. II (Paris, 1830). For a recent and very interesting compilation of oral tradition see Ba, A. H. & J. Daget, *L'Empire peul du Macina* vol. I (IFAN, 1955).

⁴ Ignored by Trimingham, *op.cit.*

Muhammad al-Maghili. The connections between Hamdullahi and Sokoto at this level were undoubtedly close, but here again the details have not been worked out as surviving fragments of correspondence between the two states have not been studied.¹

Generally speaking the movement seems to have been much less learned than that of Sokoto.² Great play was instead made with the 16th century prophesies which were held to refer to Seku Ahmadu. At the same time the jihad was very successful in converting the pagan Fulani of the region (though the converted Bambara subsequently apostacised), and it resulted in the temporary establishment of an extremely intolerant theocracy directed not only against the pagans, but also against the *'ulama'* of Jenné and the well-Islamised Songhai of Timbuktu. The excesses of the movement provoked the opposition of the Kenata Shaykhs.

The emirates did not last long. In the reign of the third *amīr-al-mu'minīn*, Ahmadu Ahmadu, dissension between him and his uncles appeared, and this greatly weakened the state in the face of foreign invasion which eventually destroyed the dynasty in 1862.³ The invader was al-Ḥājj 'Umar, the third great *mujāhid* of the century.

The significance of this movement, unlike that of Sokoto, does not lie in the persistence of its political and social structure. It is of importance rather for its work of conversion, and for the way in which its existence conditioned the activities of al-Ḥājj 'Umar. There is an over-all lack of precise information on the movement owing to the scarcity of written documents recovered, and to the fact that the oral tradition is only now being recorded in detail. Interesting studies would be the detail of the relations with the Kenata and with al-Ḥājj 'Umar.

(c) *Al-Ḥājj 'Umar*

The third and last of the great *jihāds* which I shall discuss here⁴ took place mainly in the pagan Bambara states of Nioro and Segu, and was raised by immigrant Tukolor (Torobbe), supported by settled colonies of Muslim Soninke and newly arrived Hausa. The leader, al-Ḥājj 'Umar b. Sa'id, a native of Futa Toro settled in Futa Jallon, performed a *hijra* to Dinguiray on the edge of Bambuk in 1848, and the *jihād* which followed resulted in the establishment of Muslim emirates centred in Dinguiray, Nioro, Segu and Bandia-

¹ See, e.g., IFAN Dakar, MSS arabes, Fonds Brevié 17; Bibliothèque Nationale, MSS arabes, 6584 (ff.138-42).

² No books by Seku Ahmadu have yet come to light, though it is said that he wrote a manual of *fiqh* (Ba & Daget, *op. cit.* p 62).

³ E. Mage, *Voyage*, ch. XVII.

⁴ I do not propose to deal here with the wars of Samory Ture in Guinea or Rabiḥ Zubayr in Bornu, as material available at present seems to indicate that these do not fall properly into the category of Islamic revolution. It may be

gara. These controlled an area of something over 150,000 square miles, but with a sparse population.¹

To this extent the movement fell into the standard pattern, and it is undoubtedly the case that al-Hājj 'Umar learned a great deal from Sokoto, though his debt to the earlier leaders is not usually emphasised. He was the son-in-law of Muhammad Bello, and by the latter's daughter he had Habibu who later commanded for him at Dinguiray. By another wife given him in Sokoto he had Ahmadu who succeeded him as *amīr al-mu'minīn*. He actually lived in Sokoto from 1826 to 1838², and during those 12 years he was very closely associated with Muhammad Bello's court where he played a part in public life.³ During his stay there he also wrote (1837) one of his most important books: *Ṣuyūf al-sa'īd*. The influence on him of his experience of the Sokoto *jihād* must have been considerable, though its exact nature cannot be determined until all his writings have been studied. He undoubtedly profited from his knowledge of Sokoto's difficulties, and it is clear that he collected many followers in the Hausa country, some of whom subsequently occupied prominent positions in his organisation.⁴

Al-Hājj 'Umar was a man of considerable learning, and he and his son Ahmadu collected a truly remarkable library in the palace at Segu.⁵ But his erudition hardly approached that of the Sokoto leaders, and his own literary output, though important, was much less. His inspiration seems to have come less from books than from a wide experience of the world, and this affected the way in which his movement developed. His long sojourn in Sokoto had been merely a stage on his return from the Pilgrimage during the course of which he had also visited Bornu and Egypt. In Bornu he met the reformer Muhammad al-Amīn al-Kānemī, and in Egypt the shaykhs of al-Azhar. In the latter country he must have seen something of what the Pasha Muhammad 'Ali was achieving in his attempt to make Egypt

noticed, however, that Samory certainly raised the prestige of Islam over a wide area, and effected conversion among pagan Mandingo.

¹ For an introductory account (to 1866) see Mage, *op. cit.* (followed by Delafosse, *op. cit.*). Also two other important contemporary works: Anonymous (Trans. J. Salenc), *Vie d'el-Hadj Omar* (Bull. CEHSAOF, 1918) & Mohammadou Aliou Tyam (trans. and notes H. Gaden), *La vie d'el Hadj Omar, qacida en Poular* (Paris, 1935).

² Le Chatelier, *L'Islam en Afrique occidentale* (Paris, 1899), p. 167, says that 'Umar departed on the pilgrimage in 1827. But Clapperton seems to have met him in Sokoto on his way back in 1826 (Clapperton, *Second Voyage*, p. 202).

³ Al-Hajj Sa'id, *Tarikh Sokoto* (ed. and trans. O. Houdas in *Tedzkiret en-Nisian*, Paris, 1901).

⁴ e.g. the slave Mustafa, who later commanded in Niore (See Mage, *op. cit.* 234).

⁵ See H. F. C. Smith, *The Archives of Segu* (Bull. of News, Hist. Soc. Nigeria, Supplement IV, 2, 1959). This library included a number of the Sokoto books and, of course, Muhammad al-Maghili.

the leading country of the Muslim world. His stay in the Holy Cities themselves was also a very important spiritual experience for him, and while there he can hardly have remained unaffected by the ferment of thought and activity which was accompanying the struggle between the Wahhābiyya and the Turks. The enthusiasm for *jihād* with which his long Pilgrimage inspired him was increased by his connection with the tariqa of the Tijaniyya. In Medina he came into close personal contact with the first Tijani *khalīfa* for the Hijaz who designated him as the representative of the order in the Western Sudan. This brotherhood was then something quite new and sensational. The Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijāni (dead only in 1815) taught a complete break with the old orders, and a new way to spiritual salvation through strict moral discipline. His teachings represented an instrument of religious revival likely to be very efficient in the hands of determined men: much more efficient than the abstract teachings and, for men of action, impracticable requirements of the ancient Qadiriyya. The discipline of the Tijaniyya was thus to play a very important role in the military movement initiated by al-Ḥājj 'Umar; the control which he maintained over his troops had much to do with their realisation that he possessed the secret formulae of *istikhāra* transmitted almost directly from the Shaykh himself.¹

In 1839 he settled in the Futa Jallon accompanied by a following of *ṭalaba*. From then until 1848 he prepared himself for *jihād*. This long business of preparation consisted not only of building up a great army of *ṭalaba* by teaching the *wird* of the Tijaniyya, but also in collecting war material. The *talaba* brought wealth, which was added to by the sale of *hujub*, and used for the purchase of fire-arms from European traders on the Guinea coast. This emphasis on material preparation and the use of fire-arms gave to Al-Ḥājj 'Umar's movement a quality not possessed by the *jihāds* previously described. The new camp established at Dinguiray in 1848 was a military base capable of supporting large-scale campaigns. By building up his position in this way al-Ḥājj 'Umar deliberately created the conditions of tension which were the preliminary to *jihād*.

The subsequent fighting against the Bambara was very successful, but in the conquest of Segu, Al-Ḥājj 'Umar fell foul of Ahmadu Ahmadu of Macina who regarded this state as within his sphere of influence. This led Al-Ḥājj to destroy Hamdullahi in 1862, and in this he over-reached himself, for the difficulties in which he subsequently became involved in the Macina brought about his death in 1864. The political structure which he founded was even shorter-lived than that of Seku Ahmadu. Barely 20 years elapsed between his death and the beginning of the French invasion, and within 30

¹ Muhammad Aliou Tyam, *op. cit.*, p. 13 note. Al-Ḥājj 'Umar's most famous work, *al-Rimah*, is written in the margins of *Jawahir al-ma'ani...fi fayd Abi 'Abbas al-Tijani*.

years the whole area had come under European control, and the emirates were destroyed.¹

At the same time the *jihād* represented a remarkable movement of revolution conducted over a wide area, and resulted in a serious weakening of the old pagan social order. Considerable conversion to Islam resulted. The changes involved determined the conditions facing the French on their arrival, and affected their policy in the region of Haut-Sénégal-Niger. Neither is it the case that the movement died with the destruction of the emirates by the French. Al-Ḥājj 'Umar had in fact paid comparatively little attention to details of government, leaving such matters in the hands of relatives and slaves. Instead he was continually concerned with *jihād* over an extensive area, which resulted in widespread conversion of pagan Bambara to Islam, and the solid establishment of the Tijaniyya as the dominant religious brotherhood in West Africa. A great deal of attention has been paid by French writers to the present day importance of the Tijaniyya and its offshoots in the French Community area.² The order is also gaining ascendancy over the Qadiriyya in the Hausa lands.³ Of course, not all West African Tijaniyya trace the transmission of the *wird* through Al-Ḥājj 'Umar and his associates, but it is clear that the great reputation of the order throughout the region was initially due to their effort. Though now without political power, the order represents a widely ramified social organisation with a powerful impact on individual lives.

Yet there are many gaps in our knowledge of this movement. We are very poorly informed on the doctrinal side as no study of al-Ḥājj 'Umar's writings has appeared. His military organisation, which was very important, is a further neglected study. The details of the administration of the emirates is also obscure, as also are those of his foreign relations. Much work remains to be done here.

A note on the Sources:

The sources which require study on this theme are first of all a very rich oral tradition. We are not dealing here with events vaguely recalled in tribal memory from some remote age. Most of the events involved have taken place since the birth of the great grandfathers of men still alive. Some of the events are indeed within the living memory of old men. It should be easily possible by systematic investigation to reconstruct the story of these movements in very considerable detail

¹ The amir Aqibu was in fact kept in charge of Macina by the French until 1903.

² A. Gouilly, *Islam en AOF* (Paris, 1953) and its bibliography.

³ Its influence there seems to go back to the time of al-Ḥājj 'Umar's visit, and it was subsequently thought necessary publicly to refute the suggestion that Muhammad Bello had accepted the *wird* (See Abdalkadiri dan Gidado, *al-Mawahib al-rabbaniya fi tahqiq al-tariqa al-qadiriya*, 1856). Later on, Tijani colonies were founded in Nigeria by refugees from Segu and the Macina.

from oral tradition alone. There is moreover a considerable urgency about this work. Although men are still living who can remember what this region was like in the days before the coming of the Europeans, they will soon be dead, and an invaluable source of first hand information will be lost for ever.¹

The field of written documents is also very rich and astonishingly neglected. The region is fairly well-served by European travellers, though even their journals have not yet been studied in the detail required. Most important of all, however, are the Arabic manuscripts. A very small number of these have been printed in recent times, but the vast majority have never been studied by scholars from the historical point of view. The MSS are of two types. There are first of all literary works. These are mainly doctrinal works written by the leaders, and no understanding of the thought behind the movements can be achieved without a complete study of them. Such works also often contain much incidental information on contemporary social and political conditions. There are also literary works of a historical sort. These include not only actual chronicles (which may of course be themselves collections of oral tradition), but also poems, particularly of the elegy and battle-song types. These are not necessarily written by the jihad leaders, and can throw important light on the latter's activity. The total mass of 19th century Western Sudanese writing of this sort is probably very great indeed. Big collections exist in Paris, and there are others in Dakar, Ibadan, Kaduna and Sokoto. But they are also very widely dispersed in the private hands of notables and other mallams. Besides literary works however there are also government archives. All the governments dealt with here used Arabic for correspondence, and the indication is that written documents played a large part in their administration.² A big collection was seized by Archinard at Segu, and this is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Much is also preserved by the present emirs of the old Sokoto confederation, and an attempt to build up a central collection of such papers is now being made by the National Archives administration in Northern Nigeria. Recovery of archives in the Macina however is likely to prove difficult, as the capital was destroyed and the country laid waste in war long before the arrival of the Europeans. But here again there is prospect of recovering government corres-

¹ A remarkable example of the span of living memory is provided in the person of the present Shehu of Bornu, al-Hajj 'Umar bin Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi. Born in about 1874 he remembers the end of Shehu 'Umar's reign, lived through that of Shehu Bukar, Ibrahim, and Hashim, and was seven years captive of Rabiḥ Zubayr: all before the coming of the British to Bornu in 1902.

² Attention to chancery practice of the 19th century emirates has been drawn by A. D. Bivar, *Arabic Documents from Northern Nigeria*, Bull. SOAS, XXII, 2, 1959). But this gives no indication of the enormous quantity of archival material available. Earlier translated examples of letters preserved in Sokoto are given in Backwell, *The Occupation of Hausaland*, (Lagos 1927).

pondence in outlying areas or in the foreign countries to which it was addressed. Thus letters of Seku Ahmadu and his two successors have been recovered from the region of Timbuktu, and it is possible that more may be found, for example, in the archives of Sokoto. I do not know the fate of archives preserved in the other centres established by al-Ḥājj 'Umar, and this is a question which clearly needs looking into. Though probably much has been destroyed, there is no doubt that an invaluable stock remains unexploited. Material for a handlist of MSS available is being slowly accumulated at Ibadan.

In view of the probable richness of the sources indeed, I would conclude by saying that in the study of these Islamic movements of the 19th century we have a unique opportunity of reconstructing in precise detail the story of extremely important developments in the interior of Africa before the advent of the Europeans.

THE NIGERIA—SOUTHERN CAMEROONS BOUNDARY

(*An Ethno-Political Analysis*)

by

J. C. ANENE

IT is common knowledge that the boundaries which today demarcate the emergent African states are believed to be so little adapted to indigenous historical antecedents.¹ This paper attempts to examine the extent to which this implied criticism can objectively be applied to the section of the boundary which separates Eastern Nigeria from the Southern Cameroons.

It has been claimed that all the international boundaries are arbitrary, because they are demarcations by man.² In this sense, all African boundaries may be said to be doubly arbitrary because they are the products of the diplomacy of alien powers. Most of the African territories involved have now virtually passed out of colonial categories, and it is not improbable that questions connected with boundary rectification may arise. Obviously, the aim of any boundary rectification should be to adjust the international boundaries to indigenous political and ethnological requirements. Is there a basis for applying these criteria to the boundary considered in this paper?

In assessing the effects of the Eastern Nigeria—Southern Cameroons boundary on the local groups, it is necessary to attempt an historical reconstruction of ethno-political life and organisation in the boundary zone and to indicate the influence, if any, of the available data on indigenous groups on the diplomatic negotiations which culminated in the delimitation of the boundary. The boundary zone involved in this paper comprises the loop of the Cross river, eastwards to the Cameroons mountain, and north of the Cross river bend, to the plateau of Bamenda.

On a broad linguistic basis, the inhabitants of the whole zone are regarded as falling into two classes: the Semi-Bantu and the Bantu. In fact the zone may be called the borderline of the Bantu and the Semi-Bantu-speaking peoples, and therefore a major linguistic cross-

¹ Oliver: *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*, pp.99-100.
Lady G. Cecil: *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, Vol.IV p.323 *Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXVI, 1905, pp.201-4. East and Moody: *The Changing World*, 1956, p.740.

² *Ibid.* pp.54-5.

road.¹ The Semi-Bantu include the Efik, the Ibibio, the Ekoi, the Boki and other heterogeneous groups found along the Cross river. North of the Cross river bend, the Iyala, the Yache and other intrusive elements from the Benue also belong to the Semi-Bantu. West of the Cameroons mountain the Bantu-speaking groups include the Abaw, the Bankundu, the Balundu and Balung.²

The first question that arises is whether or not the Bantu can geographically be demarcated from the Semi-Bantu in the zone under consideration. Sir Harry Johnston suggested that the boundary "may be said to start on the west coast of Africa...at the mouth of the Rio del Rey in the southern portion of the Bakasi peninsular which flanks the estuary of the old Calabar river. From the eastern bank of the Rio del Rey the boundary is carried to the Ndian river, and thence with zig zags to the western flanks of the mountains of the Western Kamerun."³ One example may be taken west of Johnston's hypothetical line to show the extreme difficulty of suggesting any line of demarcation. This example is the Bantu-speaking Ododop group which occupies the territory between the Cross river and the Calabar river. Thus in the very centre of a predominantly Semi-Bantu region is found the Bantu Ododop group. The missionaries in Calabar noted this "phenomenon" and advanced the following explanation. "Some time in the dim past a raiding force had swept down from the mountains to the east of Calabar, entered the triangle of dense forest-land formed by the junction of the Cross and Calabar Rivers, fought and defeated the Ibibios who dwelt there, and taken possession of the territory. They were of the tribe of Okoyong believed to be an outpost, probably the most westerly outpost, of the Bantu race of Central and South Africa, who had thrust themselves forward like a wedge into negro-land"⁴ The difficulties do not end here. Assuming for a moment that the human groups can be labelled Bantu and Semi-Bantu it is unsafe, in the words of Coleman, "to give ethnic and political attributes to all linguistic categories." The Baptist Missionaries of Victoria suggested a similar warning in regard to the danger of assuming that a common speech necessarily implied community of culture, origin or race.⁵

¹ Murdock: *Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture History*, 1959 pp.13-4; pp.238f.

Forde: *Ethnographic Survey*, Part IX, p.17.

Report on the Cameroons by H. B. M. Govt. 1955. p.5.

² Talbot: *The Peoples of Nigeria*, Vol.II pp.4f. See also Table No. 1.

³ Johnston: *A Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, 1919, pp.15-17.

⁴ Livingstone: *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 1916, p.57.

⁵ Goldie: *Calabar and Its Mission*, 1901, p.300.

Talbot: *In the Shadow of the Bush*, 1913, p.163.

Basel Mission Book Depot: Victoria, Southern Cameroons, 1858-1958 pp.11-13.

It is perhaps sufficient to confine our attention to the pattern of settlement in the Ekoi country in order to show the extensive intermingling and the linguistic diversities which remained obstacles to political integration. The term 'Ekoi' is an Efik, and not an Ekoi, word. And under the term, Ekoi, are included various groups; for instance, the Akaju, the Bayangi, Ejagham, Keaka, Manta, Nde, Nkumm and Obag. All these groups do not regard themselves as Ekoi. The haphazard migrations of Ekoi and non-Ekoi groups into what is usually known as Ekoi country emphasise the unreliability of applying collective terms to groups which happened to occupy neighbouring areas.

Oban town, for instance, is the very heart of Ekoi land. The traditions of the Ekoi group which founded it suggest that the land belonged to the Ojuk people who charged the new comers: "one matchet, one sheep, one piece of iron, one hoe and seven iron hooks for the right to settle; forty pieces of dried meat for the hunting rights; fifteen baskets of fish for water rights; one goat, five pieces of dried meat and five hundred pieces of ebony for forestry rights; three pots of palm oil, five hundred yams, five hundred sleeping mats and ten bundles of corn in final settlement."¹

Often groups and settlements broke up and scattered for all kinds of reasons, including the ravages of elephants and the scarcity of bachelors to woo the maidens. On one occasion the missionary Edgerley and his companions asked the Ekoi community in the Awi district why it engaged in endless migrations. In answer, the Ekoi spokesman said: "We cannot take our farms with us, and food is heavy to carry a long journey. So we go forward a little, eat all we can there, and go forward a little more".²

The emptiness of the Ekoi country and the haphazardness of the migratory groups encountered in the region probably justified the otherwise derogatory reference to the Ekoi groups by the Scottish missionaries as the "fragments of an earlier world."

Examples of non-Ekoi intrusive groups include the Uwet, the Umon, the Uyanga, the Akumakuma, the Ekuri and the Ododop. These non-Ekoi groups have traditions of migration which point to the Akpa (Jukun) invasions, a probable indication of earlier locations in the neighbourhood of the Benue tributaries. Some Ekoi groups share these traditions, others do not. The more enterprising of the non-Ekoi groups, for instance, the Umon and the Akunakuna, moved towards the Cross River and occupied strategic positions like Okerike and Ediba. The Communities here afford examples of ethnic "enclaves" in "enclaves."³

¹ Talbot: *In the Shadow of the Bush*, p.262, and pp.215-9.

² Goldie: *Calabar et Seq.* pp.271-8.

³ CALPROF. 8/2 See Macdonald's observations on Moor's expedition up the Cross River, 26 Oct. 1895.

In the region north of the cross river bend, the human pattern is confused beyond description "The tribes are a very heterogenous collection of peoples who speak a number of different languages and usually unintelligible dialects."¹ Most of the groups are no doubt fugitives from Jukun and the later conquerors of the Benue Valley, and so include Igala, and Tiv splinter communities. To the region and north-east is the Bamenda plateau which contains another ethnic "cluster"—the Bali, the Bafut, the Mbembe and innumerable Tikar groups.²

The Cross river—Cameroons zone, the zone traversed by the first section of the eastern international boundary, is one in which the complexity of linguistic pattern and the diversity of origin are perhaps without parallel in any African territory. In the absence of precise ethnic classification, the terms, Ekoi "cluster" etc., are appropriate designations.

It is extremely difficult to talk about political organisation in an area of small isolated forest communities. The communities practised what has been described as "primitive democracy." Each village was under a "Council" of elders or under a chief whose functions were more ritual than political. The Chief of Atam explained his status as follows: "The whole town forced me to be head-chief. They hanged (hung) big juju (the buffalo's horns) round my neck. . . . It is an old custom that the head-chief here shall never leave his compound. I have been shut up ten years, but, being an old man, I don't miss my freedom. I am the oldest man of the town, and they keep me here to look after the jujus. . . ."³ Political integration did not transcend the bounds of an autonomous local community. Dispersion and constant mobility afforded security to these groups because they lacked tribal, clan or effective political consolidation. The legacy of the slave trade, of enmity and strife, and the absence of integrative influences had left their unmistakable mark.⁴

There are two exceptions to the picture of political isolation sketched above. The Efiks of the Cross river and the Akunakuna group on the upper reaches of the same river exploited the opportunities afforded by their locations to achieve extensive economic and cultural power.⁵ Efik proverbs are full of suggestions of extensive political power, but what was a reality of the claim? The political structure of the Efik city-states did not provide any basis for the

Also Confidential N.1049(African, West). Inclosure 2 in No.8 Governor-General to Secretary of State, 31st August 1916.

¹ Jones: Report on the Position Status and Influence of Chiefs and Natural Rulers in the Eastern Region of Nigeria, p.49.

² Forde: *Ethnographic Survey*, Part X, pp.128-130. Part IX, pp.9-20.

³ Partridge: *Cross River Natives*, pp. 200-2.

⁴ Goldie: *Op. At.* pp.271-8.

Talbot: *In the Shadow et Seq.* pp.215-219.

⁵ Johnston: *The Story of my Life*, 1923, p.186.

political comprehensiveness implied in the claims of Efik proverbs. The Efiks had no central organs of government in their political system through which to govern the hinterland. The evidence of the Scottish Missionaries is conclusive on this point. Efik traders relied on the good will of the non-Efik groups which are strategically placed to permit or frustrate Efik commercial penetration of the hinterland.¹

It is an incontrovertible fact that the Efiks were the chief medium through whom European goods permeated to practically all the communities of the boundary zone. The Efik language, customs and fetishes were extensively adopted. From the standpoint of political relations, however, the Efik chiefs gave an annual "dash" to the "Chiefs" of the hinterland, and received in return what was known as "utomo" i.e. gifts of yam, fish and meat. What the exchange of presents symbolised was amity not political subordination.

In the hinterland, occupied by Bantu groups, the Efiks had also established a peculiar kind of relationship which was by no means political. Roger Casement explained this relationship as follows: "The Calabars were rich in goods and wanted people; the Barondos had nothing but brothers and sisters, children, and poor hungry slaves—and they wished to become rich... (hence the large number of Barondo and Efut slaves in Calabar)".²

In the area north of the Cross River bend, the Akunakunas enjoyed commercial advantages analogous to those achieved by the Efiks. The commercial activities of the Akunakuna extended from the basin of the Aweyong tributary of the Cross River to regions occupied by Tiv, Ekoi and Boki groups. The remote communities naturally welcomed the arrival of Europeans which the Akunakunas received from their Efik allies. They were not disposed, however, to abandon the political independence of their small village communities. The British administrators were to face the problems created by this tradition of political fragmentation. Moor described this situation after his failure to reconcile to neighbouring towns on the Aweyong river. They yelled derision at me and said 'very well you can go and we will fight, the side which wins to keep the beach'.³ There was nothing therefore in the indigenous political situation during the 19th century to justify Jones' suggestion of a "Cross river political area."

During the hectic months of the scramble for the coast along the Bight of Biafra, Calabar and Duala undoubtedly appeared to the Europeans to be centres of an extensive commercial zone. The British secured Calabar by treaty, the Germans secured Duala.⁴

¹ Waddell: *Twenty-nine years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, 1863, p.373.

Goldie: *Memoir of King Eyo VII*, pp.2-9.

² CALPROF: 6/1, Casement to Macdonald, 18 July, 1894.

CAL. PROV./2/688 (Calabar Archives) Intelligence Report. n.d.

³ C. O. 520/16 No. 522 Moor to C.O., 18 Nov., 1902.

⁴ Parl. Papers C. 4279, Admiralty to F.O., 26 Aug. 1884

The region between Calabar and Duala became a potential boundary zone. The problem of demarcating British and German spheres of influence seemed no more difficult than merely separating the Calabar political commercial area from that of Duala. There were, however, two complications: The Baptist Missionary settlement at Victoria and the Cameroons mountain.¹ The Anglo-German agreement to accept Rio del Rey provisionally as the eastern terminus of the British sphere of influence on the Atlantic littoral was delayed by the fact that British plans in the area had included the region of the Cameroons mountain. In the event, Granville, the British Foreign Secretary, formally repudiated the British claims to the Cameroons mountain.

The potential boundary zone thus shifted to the region west of the mountain. Herbert Bismarck arrived in London on the 4th of March 1885 to bring about a settlement of Anglo-German differences in an atmosphere of what has been cynically described as the Anglo-German colonial 'honeymoon'.² It was easy enough to settle a provisional boundary west of the Cameroons mountains. According to the "Arrangement" Great Britain "engages not to make acquisitions of territory, accept protectorates or interfere with the extension of German influence in that part of the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, or in the interior districts to the east of the following line: That is, on the coast the right bank of the Rio del Rey... in the interior a line following the right bank of the Rio del Rey from the said mouth to its source, thence striking direct to the Old Calabar or Cross river and terminating after crossing that river at the point 9° 8' longitude east of Greenwich".³ Undoubtedly the provisional arrangement contains ample reference to straight lines and to longitudes. Here indeed was justification for Sir Claude Macdonald's dramatic description that "in those days we just took a blue pencil and a ruler, and we put it down at Old Calabar, and drew that blue line up to Yola."⁴ The above description does not however, tell the whole story. The arrangement was provisional and the British Prime Minister Salisbury suggested that "when the geography of the country and the position of the various tribes are more accurately ascertained it may be found practicable to settle a fresh line in accordance with their requirements".⁵ The next few years were in fact spent in ascer-

F.O. 84/1688, Minute by Lister on Admiralty to F.O.

F.O.84/1660, Hewett to Granville, 30 July, 1884.

¹ Dugdale: *German Diplomatic Documents*, Vol. I, pp.169-192.

Rudin: *The Germans in the Cameroons*, p.50.

Also *Die Grosse Politik*, Vol.IV, p.65 and pp.79-80.

² The History of the Times, 1947; Quotes "The Times" of 12 Jan. 1885, p.17. Rich and Fisher (Ed.): *The Holstein Papers*, 1957, Vol II pp. 201-2.

³ Hertslet: *Map of Africa by Treaty*, Vol.III No.260, p.868.

Also C.O.806/242, Memorandum on Agreement, p.110.

⁴ The Geogr. Journal—Proceedings, March, 1914, See Nugent.

⁵ F.O.C.P. Confidential 5753, No.13, Salisbury to Malet, 25 Jan. 1888.

taining the position of the tribes and the geography of the boundary zone. The subsequent negotiations were based on the data which the British local agents believed they had collected.

The most active of the British agents in the question of collecting material on the indigenous inhabitants were Sir Harry Johnston, 1886 to 1888, and Sir Ralph Moor, 1895 to 1902. The German administration, on the other hand, achieved very little success in penetration from Duala and so the German Government found itself in a position of either accepting or rejecting the data which the British put forward in respect of indigenous social and political organisation.¹ The first important geographical discovery was the result of Johnston's exploration of the boundary zone. Rio del Rey was not a river as was assumed in the boundary arrangement. The exploration of Johnston also revealed to him how extensive were Efik commercial activities.² Thus in the Anglo-German boundary negotiations in 1890, the British insisted on a boundary which respected what they called the Efik commercial empire. The Germans refused to accept this argument and expelled all Efik traders on their side of the provisional boundary. The second controversy concerned the undesirability of splitting Ekoi groups in the hinterland. The British arguments were not convincing because the British agents themselves spoke about the area in terms of "an utter wilderness of dense forest uninhabited by man".³

In 1895, however, it was decided to send an Anglo-German survey party to traverse the region from the Cross river bend to the coast. In the course of their survey the commissioners sought commercial and ethnological data from the chiefs of the various towns they encountered along the provisional boundary. The commissioners became aware of the confused ethnic distribution which prevailed. They described some towns as Ekoi, others as mixed Ekoi, and yet others as non-Ekoi.⁴

In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that in the resumed negotiations of 1896 the Germans refused to accept rectifications of the provisional boundary based on the Efik commercial empire or

¹ F.O.84/1828 F. O. to Hewett, 14 Feb. 1887.
F.O.84/1839, Johnston to Salisbury, 14 July, 1887.
F.O.C.P. Confidential 5753, Inclosure in No.177. Salisbury to Malet, 28 July, 1888.

Royal Geogr. Society Proceeding, See Johnston's Paper in Vol.X, p.633 and Map. 676.

² Johnston: *The Story of my Life*, p.186.
F.O.C.P.: Confidential 6098, Johnston to F.O. No.130, 23 Oct. 1890.

³ F.O.C.P. 6471, No.32 Macdonald to Anderson (Private) 26 March, 1893.
CALPROF 6/1 Casement to Macdonald, 16 July 1894.
F.O.2/63, Report on the Niger Coast Protectorate, 21 Aug. 1894, pp.33-43.

⁴ F.O.C.P. 6837, Inclosure 5 in No.50, Moor to F.O., 21 Dec. 1895.

Ekoi solidarity. The negotiations dragged on until 1902 by when the local European officers became accustomed to speaking of English Ekoi and German Ekoi.¹ In the final boundary agreement made in 1913 what seemed to matter was the village where farmlands were not expected to be cut off from their owners. The "data" provided by the British had practically no influence on the boundary definition. In the German view "the few square miles of bog, and one of two negro villages... are quite secondary and subordinate... these protected subjects easily rebuild their huts".² The British, on the other hand, had argued for the integrity of the Efik commercial empire and for Ekoi unity, but there was no indication that Britain would have surrendered her portion of the boundary zone in order to preserve Ekoi unity.

Nobody made any pretence, during the boundary negotiations, of knowing anything about the section of the boundary region between the Cross river bend and Bamenda plateau.³ A diagonal line running north east from the Rapids of the Cross river to Yola formed a continuation of the section of the boundary already described.

On theoretical (but not on objective) grounds, the first section of the international boundary of Nigeria is open to serve criticisms. But the local situation at the time of the boundary arrangement must be seen as it must have appeared to those engaged in the boundary decision. The British self-interested assumptions in respect of the Efik empire and Ekoi solidarity did not represent the objective situation. The Scottish Missionaries of Calabar who knew the region better noted that what all the villages had in common was "their determination to enjoy their wild freedom".⁴ The truth was that parochial attitudes and loyalties, combined with linguistic diversities aggravated the fragmentation of the migratory groups, and provided no basis for clan self-consciousness or political focus.

For a realistic assessment of the effects of the international boundary on indigenous socio-political organisation, it is helpful to recall the German-Ekoi war, 1899-1904, euphemistically called the "Ekoi struggle for independence." A German officer, Captain Von Weiss and his followers were murdered at Nsakpe in Mamfe district. The murder provoked a German punitive expedition which in turn precipitated the so-called struggle for independence. No Ekoi army

¹ C.O.444/1, Moor to C.O.No.65 of 13 April, 1899.
Also Talbot: *In the Shadow* et seq. pp.151-2.

² F.O.C.P. 6164, No.3 Memorandum by Anderson on the Interview with Metternich (not dated).

³ CALPROF 8/2 Roupell to Moor 20 May, 1899.
C.O.520/16 No. 522 Moor to C.O., 18 November, 1902.

⁴ Goldie: *Memoir of King Eyo VII*, p.2.
Hutchinson: *Impression of Western Africa*, 1858, pp.166-7.
Also Anene: *Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate* (Unpublished M.A.Thesis) pp.100-104.

took the field. Each village fought or fled as it thought fit. The groups on the British side of the boundary, supposedly Ekoi, gave no assistance to the Ekoi villages at war with the Germans.¹ It is reasonable to assume that if indigenous reaction against alien occupation had been one based on coherent tribal solidarity rather than on the village, the boundary makers might conceivably have had second thoughts in 1913.

The reorganisations for local government on both sides of the boundary, after the disappearance of German rule, provide useful criteria for an objective assessment of the international boundary. In the British Cameroons, the Village Councils worked satisfactorily. The larger District Councils, which were artificially created, lacked cohesion and did not function harmoniously.² On the Nigerian side, in Ogoja Province, the native authorities based on the amalgamation of artificial clusters of towns and villages failed completely.³

In a boundary zone where political integration did not go beyond the limits of a village, can we speak of tribal "irredentism" in reaction against this section of the international boundary? The over-simplified maps which show that the Boki, the Ekoi and others have been disrupted by the boundary are quite misleading. The objective picture is that which indicates that "the ethnic pattern is not static but dynamic...past migrations and wars have left a legacy of complexly intermingled ethnic groups".⁴

It is utterly unrealistic to suggest revisions of this section of the boundary between Eastern Nigeria and the Southern Cameroons in order to satisfy tribal sentiments and unity. No one can sanely contemplate mass population transfers. This contention requires some elaboration. It is fashionable and electorally advantageous to use collective tribal names. Thus during the plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons to decide union with or secession from the Federation of Nigeria, the Boki and Ekoi groups were reminded of their close tribal affinity with their counterparts in Nigeria. An analysis of the votes cast in Mamfe and Kumba divisions reveals no pattern to suggest an awareness on the part the boundary zone groups of close ethnic or other links with Nigeria. In fact, a satisfactory international boundary designed to demarcate the intermingled ethnic groups would be something quite incomprehensible.

The Southern Cameroons has finally decided to abandon the Federation of Nigeria. A boundary problem connected with the

¹ CALPROF 6/1 No.3. Roupell to Moor, 30 November, 1899. Mansfeld: *Urwald Dokumente*, p.21. Report on the Cameroons, 1955, p.9.

² *Ibid.*, 1926, pp.18-20; 1929, pp.15-17; pp.33f.

³ Jones: Report on the Position, Status...of Chiefs, et. seq. p.49.

⁴ Buchanan and Pugh: *Land and Peoples of Nigeria*, 1955, p.95. Contrast with Talbot's Table no.5, p.26, and Table No.25, pp.60-61 in the *Peoples of Nigeria*, Vol.IV.

periodic migrations of Nigerians to the Cameroons may arise. The thinly populated Cameroons and heavily populated Eastern Nigeria are economically complementary. The people in authority in the two territories should endeavour, therefore, to eliminate the boundary as a 'human divide.' The international boundary discussed in this paper should function only as "a symbol of co-operation, friendship, and mutually profitable trade...and not as one of separation, injustice and fear".¹

¹ Boggs: *International Boundaries, A Study of Boundary Functions*, 1940, See Foreward by Bowman.
Also Davidson: *Old Africa Rediscovered*, 1960, pp.267-8.

NINETEENTH CENTURY ORIGINS OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM

by

J. F. ADE AJAYI

JAMES Coleman in his recent study, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, distinguishes between traditional and modern nationalism in Nigeria. Traditional nationalism, he says, "includes movements of resistance to the initial British penetration and occupation, early revolts provoked by the imposition or operation of alien political or economic coercions." Modern nationalism, he says, "includes sentiments, activities and organizational developments aimed explicitly at the self-government and independence of Nigeria as a nation state on a basis of equality in an international state system." He goes on to say that the earlier traditional nationalism was "probably just as intensely nationalistic and anti-European" as the modern nationalism and that no clear line can be drawn between the two: "no sharp line can be drawn between the initial resistance to the establishment of British authority and later protests or revolts against specific administrative actions which Africans deemed offensive."¹

In a review of Coleman's book, I have suggested: First, that a clear line ought to be drawn between the two movements described here; that, properly speaking, the movements led by people like Jaja aiming at the preservation of the old order in Nigeria, though intensely patriotic and a source of inspiration to later nationalists, were not in fact part of the nationalist movement. Secondly, I have suggested that Nigerian nationalism is not just a protest movement "against specific administrative actions of the British government;" that, rather, Nigerian nationalism ante-dates the establishment of British rule in Nigeria and has a positive, constructive objective that goes beyond self-government.² Its objective as Coleman rightly says is the creation in Nigeria of a nation state that would be able to take its place on a basis of equality in the international state system. It is largely to explain this point of view, which I consider essential for understanding the true nature of Nigerian nationalism, that I have thought it important to trace the nineteenth century origins of the nationalist movement in Nigeria.

¹ James S Coleman: *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (California, 1958) pp.169-70.

² J. F. Ade Ajayi: "Nigerian Nationalism", *Ibadan*, no. 10, November 1960.

It is essential to remember that the revolution initiated in Nigeria by the forcible establishment of British administration in the last decade of the nineteenth century had been preceded in the same century by two other revolutionary movements, one Muslim, the other Christian, each aiming at the re-organisation of social, economic and political life in the country. The first of these movements, the Fulani *jihad*, introduced into Nigeria the concept of a state transcending the bounds of personal loyalty to a clan, a traditional ruler or particular locality: a state seeking unity rather within the embrace of a common religion. One of the motives behind this movement may have been the desire to bring the peoples of Nigeria into a state which could rank on a basis of equality with other civilised nations of the Muslim world. On the other hand, the Fulani *jihad* definitely eschewed the idea of a nation state. In contrast to the secular, westernizing and nationalistic tendencies in Egypt and Tunis in the nineteenth century, the ideal of the Fulani empire in Northern Nigeria was to recreate in the Western Sudan the old unity of the *dār al-islam*, the Muslim community of the time of the Caliphs;¹ the values of the empire were the oecumenical values and precepts of the classical period of Islam. Thus we cannot find the roots of modern Nigerian nationalism in the Muslim revolution.

By contrast, the revolution initiated by the Christian missionaries, though less powerful and less extensive in its immediate effects, was more far reaching in its ideas. This was largely because it pointed to the future rather than the past; it was much nearer in spirit to the revolution introduced later by the British officials, the revolution which at the end of the century came to swallow up both the Muslim and the Christian revolutionary movements. In particular, the Christian missionaries introduced into Nigeria the ideas of nation-building of contemporary Europe. They also trained a group of Nigerians who accepted those ideas and hoped to see them carried out, and later began to use these ideas as a standard by which to judge the actions of the British administration. In doing this, the Christian movement sowed the seeds of Nigerian nationalism. It is essential to bear in mind, not only that this preceded the establishment of British rule, but also that it was undertaken in the belief that direct British rule was unlikely and that whatever social, political and economic changes were considered necessary in the country would have to be achieved by encouraging a new class of Nigerians themselves to reconstruct their own environment.²

¹ "In their search for the ideal society and the just ruler (*al-imam al-'adl*), they looked back to a previous golden age in the history of *dar al-islam*, and their aim was to re-create in the Western Sudan the Society of the Right-guided Caliphate". H. F. C. Smith: "A Neglected theme of West African History: the Islamic Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century". In this Issue p. 169.

² Much of the background to the argument in this paper is set out in J. F. Ade Ajayi: *Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria, 1841-91*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis of London University, 1958. See also J. F. Ade Ajayi: "Henry

Undoubtedly, the Christian missionary societies who worked in Nigeria in the nineteenth century—the Church Missionary Society of England, the Wesleyan Methodists, the Scottish Presbyterians, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Catholic Society of African Missions, of France—as a whole sought to encourage their wards ultimately to create in Nigeria one or more states in the image of contemporary Europe. And the ideal of European nations they presented to them had three essential characteristics. First, European nations were Christian. Secondly, they were civilised in the technological sense of the Industrial Revolution; in particular, they had the marvels of steam power and railways. Thirdly, petty states had long ago given way to larger, more powerful units; and where, as in Greece, Germany and Italy, this development was a little delayed, nationalist movements were already creating the larger units required for the full development of commerce and technology. The missionaries had these developments at the back of their minds¹ and they urged them on their wards largely because they could not conceive of Christianity flourishing in a social or economic or even political environment that differed in essentials from the European environment. The missionaries were not always clear as to whether this social and political environment would be the result of the introduction of Christianity or whether it must be its precursor, but they had no doubts that the two must go together.² Hence they advocated not just the introduction of Christianity, but also the abolition of both the overseas and the internal slave trade, and the development of what they called “legitimate” trade in new agricultural products to take its place. Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation, they often said, must go together. These three, working together, they believed would produce such nations as they had in mind.³

Venn and the Policy of Development”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* vol 1, no.4, December. 1959.

¹ c.f. this eulogy by Hope Wadell, pioneer missionary at Calabar, on the London-Edinburgh train in 1853: “Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. The baronial and feudal age are gone never to be recalled. The railways and trains can never yield to old barbarism. Border warfare and intestine feuds fall before them. The lords of the land and the Queen of the realm must come down from their chargers and state carriages and ride in the cars of commerce made by plebians for their own use”. (Waddell: *Journals*, vol x, p.15).

² There was much dispute in the early years of the nineteenth century among Evangelicals as to whether you can spread Christianity among un-civilised peoples.; and whether you ought to start by civilising them, or whether civilisation would of itself result from Christianity. By the 1840’s and 1850’s, most people settled for the view that they were “inseparable companions”. (e.g. Samuel Annear, “Journal of a visit to the Encampment”, Badagry 1844, Methodist archives, London.)

³ T. F. Buxton: *African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London, 1939) especially pp.8-16 giving the Prospectus of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilisation of Africa.

They did not think of themselves actually building the nations: there was no attempt to build theocracies like the Jesuits in the seventeenth century South America. They sought the co-operation of European traders and European governments, but until the time of the Scramble for Africa, they realised that the support they could get from European governments was limited. They therefore aimed only at initiating the revolution, raising up Churches and training local men who would themselves build the new nations. Hence their emphasis on education, and on raising a local staff, a local body of educated Africans. This emphasis was to a large extent due to the practical problem of the high rate of mortality among Europeans in West Africa and consequently to some amount of uncertainty as to the whole future of Afro-European relations. The missionaries argued that if Christianity would take root permanently in Africa and not be wiped out like the earlier attempts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was essential to train local people quickly to aid and eventually to replace the European missionaries. But this could not be done in isolation from the rest of society. It was essential but not enough that such people trained should be able to read the Bible and to write: they must also be able to make Bibles.¹ And that involved printing presses and something of the technology of Europe. And thus from the practical need of providing African missionaries and auxiliaries, the European missionary societies began to think in terms of raising up an African middle class on the lines of Europe and America. These would be the men to carry through the revolution initiated by the missionaries. As the general Secretary of the C.M.S. declared in 1857:²

“We hope that by God’s blessing on our plans, a large body of such Native Growers of cotton and traders may spring up who may form an intelligent and influential class of society and become founders of a kingdom which shall render incalculable benefits to Africa and hold a position amongst the states of Europe”.

The rise of such a class of educated Africans was the greatest contribution of Christian missions to Nigerian nationalism.

The first generation of this educated middle class were trained not at home in Nigeria, but abroad in Sierra Leone, Cuba and Brazil. A few of them were descendants of slaves taken a long time before from different parts of West Africa and only came to Nigeria as strangers to take advantage of new opportunities offered by the missionaries. Most of them, however, came back to Nigeria because they still remembered that they or their parents were born there. For, they were generally the very people or the children of the people enslaved

¹ T. J. Bowen: *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in Central Africa* (New York, 1857) pp.339-40.

² H. Venn to Henry Robbin, 22nd. January 1857. (CMS CA2/L2).

in the wars of the early nineteenth century resulting from the southern extensions of the Fulani *jihad* and the consequent break up of the Old Oyo empire. Some reached Cuba or Brazil, managed to secure their own emancipation and undertook the hazardous journey back. Majority of them were among those rescued by the British Navy and settled in Sierra Leone as free men, and when they began to trade down the coast, they soon realised that they were not too far away from home. By 1839 some of them began to ask to be repatriated or to arrange their own transport back. By the 1840's this became something of a mass movement.¹

The missionaries likened the return of these men to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon. We may liken it to the return of ex-servicemen of our own day. Some of them went back to their towns and villages all over the country and were easily absorbed back into the old society. But most of the others, even though they maintained contact with their relations, gathered at a few focal centres where European missionaries and the advocates of legitimate trade gave them encouragement, scope and opportunities. Abeokuta and Lagos were the two most popular centres, but significant numbers were also to be found at Calabar, Bonny, Ibadan, Ijaye, Onitsha, Lokoja and other centres up and down the Niger. Trade and missionary employment dominated their lives. Most of them were not highly educated. Many, especially those from Cuba and Brazil had, however, learnt some very useful trades and skills. Many of them could read and write in a foreign language, those from Sierra Leone in English, those from Cuba in Spanish, and those from Brazil in Portuguese. The most important factor in their make-up, however, was that in passing through slavery into freedom they had all been made acutely conscious of the gaps that separated them as a people from the Europeans. And in spite of having been subjected to Europeans or because of it, they wished to be like Europeans. They had all travelled far. A few of them had travelled widely and had seen something of the European world, either in Europe itself, or at second hand, in Sierra Leone, the West Indies or Latin America. By and large, they all came back desiring to make certain changes in the land of their birth or just hoping to see the changes come about. As a Methodist minister said of those leaving Sierra Leone in 1841, they desired for their country

“that the Gospel of God our Saviour may be preached unto her, that schools may be established, that Bibles may be sent, that the British flag may be hoisted, and that she may rank among the civilised nations of the earth.”²

¹ J. F. Ade Ajayi: “The Age of Bishop Crowther”, second of four Talks broadcast on the National Broadcasting Corporation, September 1960, as *Milestones in Nigerian History*.

² The Rev. Dove to Methodist Secretary, June 1st 1841. (Methodist *Missionary Notices*, new series, no. 1, December 1841, p.801-2.

They were the first generation of Nigerian nationalists. Their nationalism consisted in their vision of a new social, economic and political order such as would make their country "rank among the civilised nations of the earth."

Two features of this nationalism should now be noticed. One was that it was not specifically Nigerian. Nigeria did not yet exist as a political unit. The existing political units being considered too small, there was in fact no political unit with which the nationalism was identified. And there was not even a national language to give it impetus. Some did think of those who spoke a language, particularly Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, or Ibo, as providing a basis for the new nation. But it was not language but racial consciousness that gave impetus to the nationalism. Therefore, more usually, they referred to the "African Race" as the basis of the new nation. But since they knew only a part of that Africa, it was the part they knew, that is to say West Africa, that they usually had in mind. The dispersal of people from Sierra Leone to different parts of West Africa—the Gambia, Gold Coast, Lagos, the Niger, Calabar, Fernando Po, Victoria—gave rise to a class of educated Africans with relations all over West Africa, thus giving a certain reality to West Africa as the political basis of their nationalism. The nearest approach to the Nigeria of today was to be found in C.M.S. circles because their mission field covered Yoruba, the Delta and the Lower Niger and Benue, and many people thought of their mission fields as the likely basis of the new nation. For the same reason, nationalism tended to be less pronounced among those who worked in restricted fields that did not cut across the existing political units, the best example of this being the Presbyterians in Calabar.

The second feature of this early nationalism was that, as the Methodist minister quoted above put it, the nationalists desired that 'the British flag may be hoisted'. This meant not that they wanted their country to be annexed as such—and as they came to realise the full significance of annexation they did not want it—but that they actively demanded European support and tutelage. It should be remembered that, to begin with, for most of them, especially those from Sierra Leone, the typical figure of the English man was that of the kindly naval officer who broke their chains or the benevolent missionary who put them through their A.B.C., took an interest in their education and later employed them as catechists or put them in touch with English business houses with whom to trade. Between 1840 and about 1865 the belief was gradually built up in Nigeria that Britain desired nothing more than to assist these men gradually to create in their country such a nation as they dreamt about where the African would be able to show to the world that his capabilities were in no way inferior to those of other races. Various training schemes were initiated to fit them for this great responsibility. Several of them were trained in Britain in diverse fields ranging from navigation to business management, from building and tile-making to botany and

medicine, apart from literary subjects.¹ And for as many as were qualified, various opportunities existed for employment both within and outside the missions on a basis of equality with Europeans. The elevation of Crowther to the position of Bishop in the Anglican Church in 1864 and the head of an all-African staff on the Niger marked the climax of this development.

Thus these early nationalists believed that Britain was some sort of fairy God-parent who would train them and send them forth to show the world what they could do. They therefore collaborated loyally with the missionaries. They played significant rôles in pioneering various mission fields, as interpreters, teachers in the schools, itinerating evangelists in the villages, full missionaries in the main centres, working on various languages, reducing them to writing and translating the Bible into them, teaching in the training colleges or founding grammar schools. They joined missionaries too in fighting the slave trade and in encouraging the development of legitimate trade overseas in palm-oil, indigo, ivory, shea-butter and cotton. Many of them pioneered the trade in new areas and others were prominent in the export and import trade. Similarly they joined the missionaries in encouraging the British government to support these measures and to undertake fresh exertions to end the slave trade. They joined in demanding British protection at Badagry, Calabar and Abeokuta in the 1840's. In the last mentioned place, they were themselves the soldiers whom an officer of the Navy was asked to drill and to arm in order to protect that 'Sunrise within the Tropics' from the onslaughts of the king of Dahomey. And above all, they supported the British action in Lagos, both the bombardment of 1852 which expelled Kosoko and installed Akitoye and the annexation of 1861 forced on Akitoye's son.² They saw all these as an increase of the benevolent forces that were working to create the nation they dreamt about.

This brings us to the distinction which I said should be drawn between these nationalists and those who, aiming at the preservation of the old order, opposed the imposition of British influence and rule. Kosoko was a patriot, not a nationalist. He was an enlightened man who had through the support of his Portuguese and Brazilian advisers brought some improvements to Lagos. But as a traditional ruler, he was obliged to protect the survival of Lagos as an entity. The real difference between him and the nationalists was that they were much more committed to change. On the one hand, Kosoko felt none of their consciousness of the place of the African in the world and he lacked their vision of a new nation large and powerful enough to win respect for the African. On the other hand, the early nationalists had

¹ J. F. Ade Ajayi: "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development" *op. cit.*

² "Papers Relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H. M. Forces", pp. LIV, 1852, for various missionary petitions and for the activities of Commander F. E. Forbes at Abeokuta in December 1850. Also Miss Tucker: *Abeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics* (CMS 1853).

little of Kosoko's patriotism, at least not for Lagos. Many of them were in fact attached to their places of birth, Abeokuta or Ibadan or Ekiti or Ijebu, Onitsha or Brass or Lokoja. And as British influence penetrated into the interior and affected these places adversely, their local patriotism often came to clash with their overall nationalism. But in such cases they only attacked the particular methods or policies of the particular British agent, not the British connection itself to which Kosoko was opposed.

For these same reasons, the new converts in the various missions did not easily come to share this type of nationalism unless they were intimately connected with the Emigrants or had the opportunity to travel abroad or to work in different parts and thus to become more cosmopolitan. It was, however, missionary policy to encourage this cosmopolitan point of view, to take the converts out of the old society and gather them round the mission house, to make them refuse to take chieftaincy titles from the old town and generally to weaken their attachment to the old community.¹ The nationalists, too, by and large supported this policy and on the whole there was good accord between them and the missionaries until the 1860's when strains began to be felt in their relationship and there were new developments in the nationalist sentiment.

Various factors were responsible for this new development. In the first place, the missionary programme was not working according to plan and some of the educated Africans were becoming a little disillusioned. The whole plan was, of course, over optimistic and optimism alone did not work revolutions. The resources of the missionaries were severely limited. The schools they established were ill-equipped and ill-staffed. However, what irked most was the personal rivalry that often developed between European missionaries and Africans. There was often competition for office, and on such occasions, the missionaries on the spot cautioned the officials at home not to go too fast about promoting Africans to positions of responsibility on the grounds that there were limitations to their capabilities, weaknesses to their character, and defects to their Christianity. Perhaps the most spectacular of such debates was that between Henry Townsend of Abeokuta and Henry Venn, General Secretary of the C.M.S., over the appointment of Crowther to the rank of Bishop. It was in the course of that debate that Townsend denied the basis of equality on which the mission was working. The Negro, he said on one occasion, "feels a great respect for the white man, (and) God gives a great talent to the white man in trust to be used for the Negro's good." And he asked: "Shall we shift the responsibility? Can we do it without sin?"² Henry Venn knew Crowther well enough to discoun-

¹ This concept of the Mission House is discussed in chapters IV and V of J. F. Ade Ajayi: *Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria*.

² H. Townsend and others to Major Straith, October 29th 1851. (CMS CA2/016). Also Townsend to Venn, October 18th 1858, November 5th 1859, February 18th, 1860. (CMS CA2/085).

tenance such arguments. But in many cases, the Europeans on the spot could claim to know the Africans better than the officials in England knew them, and the officials could not always be firm against such arguments. And in any case, real power was often in the hands of the Europeans on the spot and they often used it to retard the advancement of their African colleagues and to discourage the development of higher education for them locally or overseas on the grounds that such education unfitted them for missionary work as it cut them off from their own people. In the circumstances, some Africans became frustrated and they began to revise their opinion of the intentions and the benevolence of the Europeans.

This development was by no means limited to the mission field. Even more than the missionaries, European traders and Government officials began to demonstrate that they were not in Nigeria just for philanthropy. They had certain interests, both personal and national, and where those interests conflicted with the interests of the educated Africans whose welfare they talked so much about, they chose their own interests. This became more than obvious when Lagos was annexed in 1861 and a British administration installed there. At first most educated Africans welcomed it for the increased opportunities they hoped it would bring, and some of them did rise to important positions in the administration. But soon the Governors began to use their position not to enhance the prestige of the African but to diminish it. And in order to survive as a viable economic unit, the Lagos administration had to capture more trade and in doing that it began to show unsuspected greed for African territories. It is true that a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1865 tried to be a little reassuring on this matter by condemning such aggression and by suggesting that Africans should be trained and encouraged to manage their own affairs. But since it did not solve the financial problems of the Lagos administration and took no positive steps to encourage African self-government, it was but poor comfort it gave.¹

One main result of this new development was that a split became discernible in the ranks of the educated Africans. A small extremist group, finding the tutelage of European missionaries irksome and frustrating, began to question the whole basis of the partnership between the educated Africans and the missionaries. This was not so much a Nigerian as a West African movement. The leader of the group, Edward Blyden, did not visit Nigeria until 1891, but was well known from his books and pamphlets. He was born in the Dutch West Indies and came to Liberia only because State laws in the U.S.A prevented his admission into a suitable university. In the Liberian College, he distinguished himself in both classical and modern

¹ This however does not affect the fact that the educated Africans treated the arguments for self-government seriously. These arguments to some extent inspired G. W. Johnson's activities at Abeokuta, the Mankessin Constitution

European languages. He taught for a while in the College, then became Secretary of State and later Liberian ambassador in London. When he lost office, he went to Freetown and took a government job as Agent for the Interior. It was this that brought him in contact with the revolutionary movements in Islam creating new states and new empires in the Western Sudan. Blyden found the independence of mind, the administrative and constructive abilities of the Muslim leaders a great contrast to the mission dominated Africans of the coast. He therefore began to denounce the mental slavery which, he said, the missionaries were substituting for the old physical slavery in Africa and to urge a mental emancipation. He advocated reforms in education and in particular, in 1872, he urged the establishment of an Independent West African Church and a West African University to recruit professors from Egypt, Timbuctoo, and the new centres of Muslim civilisation in the Sudan.¹

While this extremist group throughout West Africa looked to Blyden for leadership, its most representative figure in Nigeria was G. W. Johnson at Abeokuta. He led a revolt against what he called the petticoat policy of the missionaries in keeping Christian converts and educated Africans away from the society and the politics of the old community. He tried to rally all the Emigrants together to form a united front and help to reform the Egba government and establish what he called "a civilised form of government." In 1868, he wrote to the editor of a London weekly, the *African Times* to,

"tell England that their efforts to civilize and christianize Africa by sending missionary after missionary can have but very partial success, until they become convinced that something more is wanted besides sending missionaries and putting men of war on the sea, and that is to encourage the forming of self-government among educated Africans."²

Crowther who had just been made a bishop and had the challenge of a vast mission field on the Niger before him was most conscious of the support he needed from Europe and he therefore tried to rally the nationalist forces to the side of the missionaries. He was willing to criticise each individual act of each individual missionary, trader, or government official who frustrated the ambitions of Africans. But, assured of the support of friends like Henry Venn in England, he

on the Gold Coast, and J. A. B. Horton's *West African Countries and Peoples* (London 1868) where he argued that something positive should be done to carry out the committee's recommendations.

¹ Edward Blyden's Obituary Notice in *Journal of the African Society* vol. xliii. no. 11, April 1912; Edward Blyden: *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Lond. 1889); *Letters with Pope Hennessy on the West African University* (Freetown 1873).

² Draft of letter to Edward Fitzgerald, Editor *African Times*, in G. W. Johnson's Papers, Library, University College, Ibadan.

could not accept that there was any danger as such in European tutelage or that the time had come to shake it off. "Africa for the Africans, the rest of the world for the rest of mankind, indeed," he scornfully remarked in a charge he delivered to his clergy in 1869. And he went on:

"If we have any regard for the elevation of Africa, or any real interest for the evangelization of her children, our own wisdom would be to cry to those Christian nations which have been so long labouring for our conversion to redouble their Christian efforts".¹

But by the late 1870's, not even the strong faith of Crowther in the benevolence of Europe could prevent the general spread of disillusion among educated Africans. The interest of the European powers in Africa was rising. The pulse of competition was quickening. In place of the lonely missionary explorer largely dependent on African goodwill in the interior of Africa and therefore in a position to show respect and deference to Africans where this was due, there began to descend upon Africa a horde of European adventurers and explorers, backed up powerfully by European governments, often with an army of porters and mercenaries bearing deadly maxim guns. They had no need to show deference to Africans; it was unnecessary, impolitic and inexpedient. In the circumstances, the old theory about equality was being challenged not just by individual missionary or official ambitious for office but by the general body of Europeans in Africa.

Undoubtedly, the last quarter of the nineteenth century which saw the Partition of Africa also saw a definite growth in Europe of the feeling that Europeans were a superior and the Africans an inferior race of people. When in 1854 Arthur de Gobineau, a Hanoverian, published *The Inequality of Human Races* denying among other things that Christianity made any difference to the capacity of the Negro to absorb European civilisation,² few people took him seriously. When in the 1860's the Anthropological Society, led by James Hunt and Richard Burton, in the name of physical anthropology and the differentiation of the races, began to give publicity to these ideas and to arrange the different races in a hierachial order leading from the ape to the Aryan, they were regarded as Radical and odd.³ But with the new developments in Africa, these ideas began to acquire new

¹ Bishop Crowther's Charge delivered to his Clergy on the Niger in 1869. (CMS CA3/04).

² Arthur de Gobineau: *The Inequality of Human Races*, translated by Adrian Collins, (Heinemann, London 1915) especially chapter VII.

³ Proceedings of the Anthropological Society entitled *Memoirs*, 1863-69; *Dictionary of National Biography*, article on James Hunt; R. F. Burton: *Mission to Gelele*, 2 vols, London 1864; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1957, article on Anthropology.

relevance and to gain greater currency. The more lurid writings of the missionaries about Africans also began to lend weight to these views. Many missionaries would themselves have none of the scientific evolution or anthropology, but they gave consideration to the theory that Africans were the sons of Ham cursed by Noah to serve for ever the children of Shem and Japhet, particularly Japhet. Consequently, the type of aspersions cast by Townsend on his African colleagues, which had been treated in C.M.S. House in the 1850's and 1860's as heresies, had by the 1880's become an everyday orthodoxy.

This new attitude of the Europeans came as a surprise, sometimes as a shock even, to the educated Africans. And, as a result, the 1880's was full of tension between European missionaries and their African colleagues and congregations. In 1882, there was a minor schism in the Presbyterian Church in Calabar. In 1884, a schism was barely averted in the Lagos Methodist Church. In 1888, a major split occurred in the Baptist Church in Lagos. And the unrest of the decade came to a climax in 1890 when Crowther was forced to resign from the Niger as a result of the humiliating treatment he received from young European missionaries seeking to impose European supervision on the African staff.¹ That was the occasion of Blyden's visit to Lagos. He delivered a public address entitled "The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church"² which was the immediate inspiration for the founding of the United Native African Church. That is to say that as a result of the new developments in the attitude of Europeans towards Africans, the ideas and sentiments of Blyden and G. W. Johnson, restricted in the 1860's to an extremist group on the fringes of the Church, began in the 1880's to gain greater acceptance among the educated Africans, even among the loyal members of the various Churches.

These ideas gained acceptance to the extent that there developed generally among the educated Africans a more critical attitude to the unthinking adoption of European way and ideas, as well as a greater interest in the history of the African peoples and greater sympathy for the indigenous way of life. There was in fact a minor cultural renaissance in Lagos in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It began with the ceremonious discarding of European clothes and European names. George William Johnson became Oshokale Tejumade Johnson; David B Vincent, one of the leaders of the Baptist schism, became Mojola Agbebi. The Revd. later Bishop James Johnson did not discard his own name but he began to refuse to baptise children with foreign names.³ On the social side, the educated Africans began

¹ J. F. Ade Ajayi: *Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria*, chapter VIII.

² Edward Blyden: *The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church*, published text of Lecture delivered in Lagos on 2nd January 1891.

³ J. O. Lucas: *History of St. Paul's Breadfruit Church* (Lagos 1952).

to take interest in indigenous dancing; they began to catalogue the various types of African dances and to advocate some measure of them in their balls.¹ On the religious side, they began to demand local airs in their church worship, and some reform of the liturgy to take account of the deep knowledge of God to be found in the indigenous religions. Research was conducted into the liturgies of these religions, especially into the Divination Poems of Ifa.² It was urged that there existed at least three principles of the indigenous religions on which the teachings of Christianity could be based: the existence of a spirit-God, the belief in sacrifice, and the belief in life after death.³ On the aesthetic side, African art forms which in the Sierra Leone exhibition of 1865 had been classified as rough and repulsive⁴ began to be better appreciated and Mojola Agbebi drew attention to the beauty of the figures in the groves of Ile-Ife.⁵ Above all, the educated Africans began to take an interest in the politics and the history of the indigenous peoples. They read the accounts of the various explorers intimately and constructed their own theories of African history.⁶ More particularly, this decade saw the publication of C. J. George's *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Tribes*, Otonba Payne's *Historical Notices of the Yoruba People* and the completion of Samuel Johnson's impressive *History of the Yorubas*. In 1901, the Lagos Institute was founded to co-ordinate and to promote this spirit of research.⁷

But in spite of this cultural nationalism and of so much talk of

¹ J. O. George: *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes*, based on lectures delivered in Lagos 1893-95, (published E. Kauffman, Lahr, Baden), pp.49-50.

J. Johnson to Wright, August 2nd 1876 (CMS CA2/056).

² J. O. George: *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes op. cit.*, p.55-56. Mojola Agbebi: "Inaugural Sermon delivered at the Celebration of the First Anniversary of the African Church, Lagos, West Africa, December 21st 1902", in *Report of Proceedings of the African Church Organisation for Lagos and Yorubaland 1901-1908*, pp.90.

³ The Rev. Esiere (pseudonym, probably for the J. C. Taylor): *As Seen Through African Eyes* (Torquay, no date), pp. 53-54.

⁴ The Industrial Exhibition at Sierra Leone, 1865. (London 1866) p.39. "A rough carving in wood from Abeokuta consisting of a woman bearing on her head a large round bowl...this figure is supposed to represent a native trading woman and is an object of worship". "One small wooden idol.....the breast studded with cowrie shells, the head and face are extremely repulsive; it is a household object of worship".

⁵ Mojola Agbebi: "Inaugural Sermon..." *op. cit.* p. 93: "the unaccountable evidences of human skill and genius with which heathenism is surrounded and among which the people live and move and have their being..."

⁶ eg. Esiere: *As Seen Through African Eyes op. cit.*, pp.49-60 entitled "Our Genesis and Exodus".

⁷ J. A. Otonba Payne. *Table of Principal Events in Yoruba History* (Lagos 1893). J. O. George: *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes op. cit.* Samuel Johnson: *History of the Yorubas*, completed in 1897, not published till 1921, by the C.M.S., London. *Proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting of the Lagos Institute, Founded 1901.*

schism, the attachment of these educated Africans to Europe remained very strong. Most of those who listened to Blyden advocate the establishment of an African Church applauded his arguments but could not easily bring themselves to join such a Church which they regarded as a sort of tribal organisation cut adrift from the rest of Christendom. The schism in Calabar and in the Lagos Baptist Church were soon composed. Crowther resigned in protest but refused to support secession. His son as Archdeacon of the Niger Delta Pastorate refused, after his father's death, to recognise the authority of the C.M.S. missionaries, but he did not consider secession from the Anglican Church. The truth was that though they were suspected and discredited by the Europeans, these men, as nationalists, remained faithful to their ideal of seeing a new nation built in Nigeria and they could see no better alternative to the British in achieving this. They did not like the methods the British were using on the Niger, in Ijebu, in Benin and other places; and they said so in profuse petitions, no longer to the missionary societies but to the Aborigines Protection Society. But at the same time, Samuel Johnson and Bishop S.C. Phillips lent their services in establishing the Lagos Protectorate. James Johnson moved into Benin to give missionary support to the new administration. Dandeson Crowther and his colleagues of the Niger Delta Pastorate similarly co-operated with the Niger Coast Protectorate. Thus the gap between the nationalists and the traditional rulers committed to preserving the old order remained significant. Samuel Johnson had come to understand the views of the Alafin much better than his father would have understood Kosoko's point of view. He believed that Jaja had been treated unfairly and would have signed petitions on his behalf. Yet he blessed the British intervention as an act of God. In the same way, the pamphleteer who said: "I speak feelingly about my colour. . . . we are undeservedly under-estimated all round," at the same time urged his friends to take the view that "the British do not want to occupy our country: they are teaching us to govern ourselves".¹

Thus at the end of the nineteenth century, the driving force of nationalism in Nigeria was not loyalty to Nigeria as such, but racial consciousness as Africans. Its immediate aim was not self-government, but training for self-government, training Africans to play a role such as would enhance their prestige in the world. The nationalists had some sympathy for the predicament of the traditional rulers in the humiliation which British rule was imposing on them, but the nationalists could not see the traditional authorities, committed as they were to preserving the older order, becoming the basis of the new nation. That was why they were so opposed to Lugard's system of administering the country through traditional rulers and the existing states instead of through the educated Africans.

In 1914, Nigeria became a political reality and, from the 1920's,

¹ Esiere: *As Seen Through African Eyes*, op. cit.

it began to attract to itself some measure of political attachment. Thus nationalism in Nigeria became more and more Nigerian. The Indirect Rule system was enforced and the traditional authorities did not just wither away as the early nationalists seem to have imagined they would. Education developed in the country and the influence of the cosmopolitan tradition of the Emigrants began to wane as a new body of nationalists arose, more attached to localities in Nigeria and working their nationalism up from the local level. The new political and economic order created new grievances and demanded new tactics from the nationalists. The nationalist movement came to take on the airs of a protest movement such as described by Coleman in his book, and from the time of the second World War, self-government became its immediate objective. But all the time, the influence of the nineteenth century has remained an important element in Nigerian nationalism. It was transmitted to this age largely through the African Church and through Crowther's grandson, Herbert Macaulay, and through Zik, an admirer of Edward Blyden. This influence of the nineteenth century gives Nigerian nationalism its pan-African flavour and its character as a responsible, constructive force aiming not just at self-government for its own sake but rather for the sake of creating the nation that would achieve for the peoples of Nigeria and Africans as a whole a place of equality in the international state system.

THE PRESENT STATE OF IBO STUDIES

by

SIMON OTTENBERG

THE writer has recently returned from carrying out anthropological research in the Ibo country of southeastern Nigeria.¹ It appears on surveying the literature of this area that there has been inadequate research into the anthropology, sociology, and history of the Ibo cultures in this region. This paper will review the major forms of research and the publications on the Ibo since World War II, and make recommendations for types of research projects that would be of value in the future. The sense of the inadequacy of the present state of Ibo studies is fortified by the knowledge of the large size of this Nigerian group (more than five million persons), and by the important role that Ibo people have played in the economic development of Nigeria and in its political movements.

I

The quantity of published material on the Ibo since World War II is large, but much of it represents peripheral information, or in some cases data collected by untrained persons. The general impression one gets is that while some of the published material is very useful, we are a long way from arriving at an overall picture of Ibo life and society, and that many of the research projects of recent years are too unrelated to provide a comprehensive view of the Ibo.

The best and most useful general work is that of Forde and Jones (1950), which summarizes our knowledge of the Ibo at the time of publication and also provides a classification of the various Ibo groups and a useful bibliography (supplemented by Ottenberg, 1955a). But the work also indicates clearly the sparseness of our general knowledge of the area and the people, particularly in comparison with certain other Nigerian and African groups of similar size and importance.

¹ Research was carried out at Afikpo between December, 1951, and February, 1953, with the aid of a Foreign Area Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council of New York and a grant-in-aid from the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. More recently further research was conducted at Afikpo and Abakaliki between September, 1959, and December, 1960, with the assistance of a research grant from the National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C. I wish to thank my wife, Dr Phoebe V. Ottenberg, for suggestions and assistance in the preparation of this paper.

Since the war a number of anthropologists have worked in Ibo country, but none have published extensively. The Ardeners carried out research at Mba-Ise between 1949 and 1951. E. W. Ardener has written an unpublished report on a socio-economic survey of this group of Ibo (1952), and he and his wife have both published articles on social change and other aspects of the culture and society of the Mba-Ise (E. W. Ardener, 1953, 1954a, 1954b, 1959; S. G. Ardener, 1953).

The Ottenbergs carried out research at Afikpo from December, 1951, to February, 1953, the investigation being mainly concerned with traditional Afikpo culture. S. Ottenberg dealt mainly with authority and leadership, and his wife was concerned with marriage and family groupings. In addition to their dissertations (S. Ottenberg, 1957; P. Ottenberg, 1958), they have published several articles on Afikpo (S. Ottenberg, 1955b, 1956, 1960; P. Ottenberg, 1959), but the bulk of their material remains unpublished. The Afikpo are a peripheral Ibo group in the east and are in many ways socially and culturally more akin to non-Ibo groups such as the Yakö and the Nkumeru who are their neighbors in the Cross River area. S. Ottenberg has also published two general articles on the Ibo, one a discussion of Ibo oracles, mainly with reference to Aro Chuku (1958), and the other an attempted analysis of the reasons for Ibo receptivity to change (1959). S. Ottenberg carried out further research at Afikpo in the latter part of 1959 and the first half of 1960, and at Abakaliki in the latter half of 1960. At both places research was done on social change and the development of new forms of leadership.

Horton has carried out research at Nike, near Enugu, for a brief period, and he has published a useful article on the *ohu* form of slavery formerly found there (1954) and another paper on the world view and religious beliefs of this group (1956). Boston has worked on a survey of Ibo culture on behalf of the Nigerian Antiquities Service, and he has recently published an interesting paper on certain rituals in the Nri-Awka area (1960a), a short article on *alosi* shrines at Udi (1959), and a paper on Igala-Ibo contacts (1960b). At present Richard Henderson is carrying out research on changing family structures at Onitsha, Dr Magaret Fisher Katzin is conducting a study of the Onitsha market, F. Ikenna Nzimiro is in the midst of a comparative study of a number of Ibo communities, and Dr Josef Gugler, a German sociologist, is working on the relationship of urban dwellers to their rural homeland in Eastern Nigeria.

In addition, Jeffreys, who was an administrative officer in Ibo country many years ago, continues to publish articles of anthropological interest (1946, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1955, 1956a, 1956b, 1956c, 1957, 1960, and others). He holds strong beliefs concerning the influence of Egyptian culture on the Ibo, but the evidence is not really conclusive. Much of his material concerns the Nri-Awka area. Jones, another former administrative officer, now teaching anthropology at Cambridge University, has published a number of substantial articles

since the war based on his prewar experience in Eastern Nigeria and on unpublished Government records. These include a useful study of the cattle trade in Nigeria (1946), a study of dual organization among the Ibo (1949a), an analysis of forms of Ibo land tenure (1949b), and a study of the older forms of currency in Nigeria (1958). He has more recently published a valuable survey (1961) of the Northeastern Ibo based on research carried out in 1929 and a visit in 1956, as well as on government records.

Some further anthropological material, mainly unpublished, is of interest. Watson (1953) has written an anthropological thesis based on Ibo informants in the United States which is concerned with changes in social stratification and authority in the northern Ibo area. Brown (1951a), in a thesis based on library materials, has made a valuable comparison of a number of West African political systems, including the Ibo. She has published an article summarising her findings (1951b). Easterfield (n.d., 1952-1953) has collected a useful autobiography of an Aro Chuku man. Okala (1953), an Onitsha Ibo who studied in the United States, has described some of the traditional customs and educational practices of the people in his home area.

No major anthropological monographs on the Ibo have appeared since World War II with the exception of Green's study of Umueke Agbaja (1947), which is based on field work carried out between 1934 and 1937. This and Meek's earlier work (1937) represent the two major studies of Ibo society based on field research that have been published aside from Forde and Jones' summary monograph already mentioned. Green's work contains interesting data on the role of women in village and family affairs, but it is not a well-rounded ethnographic study of an Ibo village. Meek's earlier work is a compilation of data on Ibo culture, based partly on his own researches (mainly in the Owerri area) and partly on a series of Intelligence Reports made by the government in the early 1930's. Today this work seems too general and unsophisticated, though it is a notable pioneer attempt to analyze the characteristic features of Ibo society.

Some of the most useful writings on Ibo have been published in areas peripheral to anthropological research. Jones' study of the status of chiefs in Eastern Nigeria (Nigeria, Eastern Region, 1956) made at the request of the Eastern Region government, provides a great deal of useful general data on virtually all Ibo areas (see also Akpan, 1957). Again the report of the Minorities Commission (Great Britain, Colonial Office, 1958) gives useful information on the relationship of the Ibo to other peoples in southeastern Nigerian. There has also been an interesting report on bride price in the Eastern Region (Nigeria, Eastern Region, 1955a), which formed the basis for the present law regulating bride price in that area. The report of the Kano disturbances (Nigeria, 1953) throws light on the problem of Ibo living in the Moslem North. The Ibo played an active role in these disturbances.

The important study of nationalism and the rise of political parties

in Nigeria by Coleman (1958) offers splendid data on the development of the N.C.N.C. and its relationship to Ibo society, as well as information on Ibo participation in politics in general. A more recent work by H. and M. Smythe (1960) on Nigerian elites, though less specifically detailed in its material on the Ibo than Coleman's, also provides useful insights into status changes and social development.

Dike's fine historical study of the Niger Delta area (1956) provides material on the relationship of the inland Ibo, especially the Aro, to the Delta trade, and on the role of the Ibo in the trading communities that developed along the coast. Anene (1956), using documentary materials, discusses the position of the Aro and the military expedition of 1901-1902, which weakened the Aro's strong position in Ibo country. Another historian, Hair, following the labor riots of 1949 at Enugu, has carried out a study of the development of Enugu township with special reference to the labor force at the coal mine (1953, n.d.), but much of his work remains unpublished. The reports of the riots (Great Britain, Colonial Office, 1950a, 1950b 1950c) provide useful data on the problems of the development of the labor union at the colliery.

Some very useful materials concerning the history of the Christian missions in Ibo country have appeared since the Second World War. Dike (1957), has published a brief but valuable summary of the origins of the C.M.S. Niger mission and Epelle (1955) has produced a more detailed history of this mission in the Niger Delta area. A useful history of the C.M.S. hospital at Iyi Enu near Onitsha has been written by Roseveare (1946), and Hensley (n.d.) has recently published an account of her experiences as a missionary in Ibo country between 1897 and 1909, during which period she worked and travelled extensively for the C.M.S. mission. A detailed biography of Bishop Shanahan of the Catholic Mission in Ibo country has been published by Jordan (1949), and a shorter version produced by the Holy Ghost Fathers, Onitsha (n.d.). For the eastern Ibo area the general history of the Church of Scotland Mission by McFarlan (1946) touches on mission developments there. There has been little systematic analysis by anthropologists or others of the effects of missions on Ibo culture and society other than an interesting Ph.D. thesis by Ezeanya (1956).

In the field of prehistory little research has been done in Ibo country. It appears that only one scientific archaeological excavation has been conducted, that recently directed by Shaw (1960a, 1960b) at Igbo-Ukwu in Awka Division. Here a very interesting collection of bronze objects has been obtained through carefully controlled excavation, which greatly supplements similar objects collected at the same place by Field in 1939 (1940).

Geographers have recently begun to make contributions to Ibo studies. Chubb has made a valuable general survey of Ibo land tenure (1948) which augments Jones' previously mentioned study (1949b). Grove has produced a major monograph on soil conditions in Ibo country. This is concerned mainly with Oko village, near Awka

(1951a; see also Grove, 1949, 1951b). This is an excellent analysis of both human and geographic factors in a single study. Morgan has studied the interrelationships of settlement patterns, farming practices, and population density and distribution at Ngwa and Ikwerre (1956a) and in the Northern and Northeastern Ibo areas (1956b, 1957). Prothero (1955) has discussed the population of eastern Nigeria on the basis of the 1953 census returns. The returns of this census, and those of Lagos in 1950 and the Northern and Western regions in 1952, form valuable basic data for almost any social science research in Ibo country and indicate the extent to which Ibo have migrated to other sections of Nigeria from their homeland (Nigeria, Census Superintendent, 1953-54a, 1953-54b; Nigeria, Department of Statistics, 1951, 1956, n.d., n.d., n.d.). Gourou has also discussed the causes of high population density among the Ibo and Yoruba (1947).

Despite the importance of the introduction of Local Government in the Ibo area in the 1950's there has been little in the way of substantial research carried out on this problem. A great deal of attention has been given to what should be done in Local Government and too little attention is being paid to realistic analyses of what is actually occurring. Harris (1957) and Akpan (1955, 1956) have written general discussions on local government. Livingston Booth (1955) and S. Ottenberg (1956) have both discussed Local Government reforms at Afikpo. Stevens (1953) has written about the first introduction of Local Government in the Eastern Region, and Wood (1959) a brief but interesting survey of local political development in Ibo country since early colonial days. There has also been a series of published reports of inquiries into the affairs of Local Government Councils, mainly in urban areas (Nigeria, Eastern Region, 1954, 1955b, 1955c, 1955d, 1955e), and other inquiries have been and are still being made, though their conclusions have not been published.

Community development and literacy training programs are found in Ibo country. The work in Udi Division in the late 1940's and early 1950's has been recorded in the film "Daybreak in Udi" and in numerous publications by Chadwick, who helped initiate the Udi programs (see especially 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1951) and by others (Anon, 1949, 1951a). Jackson (1956) has described the general problems of community development in Eastern Nigeria in a work which is the most frank and self evaluative of any of the publications on community development in this area. This book, as well as an article by Jackson (1954) also contains information on community development projects at Awgu. Mann (1951, 1953) and others (Anon., 1951b, 1954) cover the Okigwi area. Prior has described the rural training school at Asaba operated by the Church Missionary Society (1947a, 1947b, 1947c, 1949), which was concerned with training youths for agricultural work in an attempt to stem the tide of their migration to the cities.

One of the most exciting developments in recent years has been the emergence of Ibo writers of fiction dealing with Nigerian life.

Achebe's well known novel (1958), which takes place in an Ibo village, provides a realistic and penetrating view of village life at the period of early British contact. This novel has been followed by a second which is concerned with the fortunes of one of the members of this village in Lagos (1960). Ekwensi, another Ibo writer, has published a number of tales with an Ibo setting (1949), but his more recent writings (Young 1947, Ekwensi 1950, 1954, 1960a, 1960b) are concerned with other sections of Nigeria or with West Africans in general. In addition, there have appeared a large number of novelettes and dramas published in English in pamphlet or booklet form and sold mainly in Ibo markets and in Nigerian bookshops, generally for a shilling or two. These seem frequently to have been written by schoolteachers and headmasters. Often crude in English stylistic usage, and imitative of the Western European and American love story or of the "gunman" tale, they provide interesting insights into the effects of social and cultural change on traditional Ibo values and beliefs, and many of them mirror conflicts between old and new cultural traditions (see, for example, the publications of Anya, Obikwelu, Uba, Nnani, Olisah, Madumere, Nwosu, Ogali). There seems to be little vernacular literature other than material written for elementary school children, though an interesting biography of an Okigwi man by Nwana has been published in Ibo in both the old and the new orthography (n.d., 1951). Unlike many other African groups the Ibo appear anxious to use English rather than their native tongue in their writings. This appears to be part of a larger pattern of social change and reaction to Western European culture.

With regard to the Ibo language, Abraham is now finishing a much needed dictionary of Ibo under contract with the Eastern Region government, and he is preparing a grammar as well¹. F. C. Ogbalu, one of the founders of the Society for Promoting Ibo Language and Culture, and more recently of the African Literature Bureau, has long taken an interest in the Ibo language, and he has published a discussion of the new orthography (1953), and, more recently (n.d., 1959) a grammar and an Ibo-English dictionary. Another Ibo, Okonkwo, has also written an Ibo grammar (1957). The works of these two authors are primarily for the use of Ibo who wish to study their own language in order to pass school examinations in this language and in order to be able to write it fluently. Kelly (1954) has written a grammar of Onitsha Ibo which is primarily of use to Europeans wishing to learn that tongue, and Carnochan has recently published a new and useful analysis of Ibo vowel harmony (1960).

Green, previously mentioned as the author of an Ibo village study, has written an explanatory statement of the new Ibo orthography, which she helped to devise (1949a). This new orthography is now used in official government publications and in government schools in

¹ Personal communication from Dr Robert G. Armstrong.

the Eastern Region and in some school books, but it has never been fully accepted by certain missionary and education organizations who prefer the old orthography. There have been virtually no linguistic analyses of Ibo published since the earlier work of Ida Ward, with the exception of the articles by Green (1948, 1949b) and Carnochan (1948, 1960). There does not seem to be any problem as to the linguistic classification of Ibo relative to other African languages (Greenberg, 1955, Westermann and Bryan, 1952).

During the postwar period there has been not only an increasing interest in fiction by Ibo authors but also a growing concern with local history and Ibo culture. This is reflected in the large number of pamphlets and booklets now being printed on local presses in the Eastern Region (see, for example, Idigo, Umo, Ekeghe, Oduche, Ike, Nwafor, Ogbalu, Society for Promoting Ibo Language and Culture). Most of these are written in English, but a few are in Ibo. These publications are of varying quality from the point of view of the social scientist, but in some instances they contain virtually the only information available on a particular group or village. They indicate the increasing interest of the Ibo in recording their own customs and history, and they are harbingers of the day when Nigerians will carry the major share of the burden of research into Ibo life and culture. In addition, general articles on Ibo life and custom continue to appear in Nigerian and other journals (for example, Ezeabasili, Amugbanite, Arikpo, Clinton, Ukpabi, J. O. Nzekwu, O. Nzekwu). Anonymous articles on the Ibo also frequently appear in *Nigeria* (Anon., 1957a, 1957b, 1957c, 1958, 1960). The Nigeria Union of Teachers has a pamphlet on Ibo etiquette designed to standardize Ibo customs and to promote their teaching in the schools (1949).

II

Although the postwar literature on the Ibo seems voluminous there is inadequacy of knowledge in almost every direction. Some research and writing have been done here and some there, but the sum total of the writings does not add up to a very substantial body of knowledge. The following areas of research are suggested with the thought that they may fruitfully help to organize activities around certain core problems and interests. It is not meant to imply that they are the only useful research subjects.

Four major subject fields of research may be considered. These are:

- A. Theoretical problems.
- B. Ethnographic and sociological studies.
- C. Historical and archaeological analyses.
- D. Present-day social problems.

A. Theoretical Problems.

In the study of any particular people certain problems or questions arise, the answers to which not only add to the general body of knowledge but also to an advancement in social science theory in terms of the conceptualization of how societies function and organize themselves to carry out tasks. Different societies seem to bring forth differing theoretical questions of special interest. Among the Ibo at least five are of importance to the anthropologist:

1. The nature of the traditional Ibo system of leadership and authority has never been fully analyzed. Traditional Ibo society is particularly interesting since it is a nonstate organization in which both unilineal descent and association groupings play strong roles in government. The particular manner in which these two kinds of groupings carry out their respective roles in traditional government varies among different local groups, but there appear to be underlying common elements that could be analytically sifted out. Leadership in Ibo society, both traditional and that which is emerging, is not simple, not strictly hierarchical or centralized, and it seems largely based on rather informally cast political roles. Societies which possess these particular features in Africa are in need of adequate analysis in terms of the development of anthropological theory. In addition, research in this direction would throw light on the pattern of the emergence of modern political forms in the East, and perhaps on other sections of Nigeria where Ibo influence has been strong. The modern forms have been discussed, notably by Coleman (1958), but their relation to traditional structures is still unclear.

2. A negative question, which also has significance in studies of social change and development, concerns itself with why no state system developed in Ibo country in response to the European slave trade. In an article concerning Ibo oracles the writer (S. Ottenberg, 1958) suggested why this might be so, but his conclusions are only tentative. The fact is that in certain parts of Africa, both on the West Coast and in Southeast Africa, rather complex state systems developed apparently in response to the demands of the European slave trade, and in some cases the Arab slave trade as well. This did not occur in southeastern Nigeria despite intensive trading for many years in the area, though small chiefdoms did develop along the coast. It may be because there are some fundamental factors in the nature of traditional Ibo society and values that prevented such a development. What these are, however, have never been fully worked out. In terms of theories of traditional state development in Africa, as well as elsewhere, the negative case of the Ibo is as significant as the positive cases of Dahomey and other states which did so develop.

3. The Ibo people are known to possess certain personality characteristics often described as aggressiveness and frankness. They are people who strongly desire to "get ahead", and they are highly receptive to change and to new conditions. In a previously

published article, S. Ottenberg attempted a preliminary analysis of some of the reasons for this receptivity and for their general personality characteristics (1959), but more research needs to be done in this area. There remains the need to understand why the Ibo possess the particular characteristics they do, characteristics not by any means found among all groups in Nigeria or Africa. The answer probably will grow only out of studies of Ibo child rearing practices and family organization made within the framework of considerable knowledge of the Ibo social and political structures. It is assumed that there is a connection between childhood training and experience and adult social and political behavior, though this connection is a subtle and difficult one to handle and to analyze. In terms of theories of cultural factors in personality development, the Ibo case seems to be a particularly interesting one.

4. One of the unusual features of Ibo society is high population density, which also occurs, of course, in other southern and some northern Nigerian groups. There is no adequate understanding of why densities of from four hundred to a thousand persons per square mile apparently developed in Ibo country previous to major influence emanating from direct contact with European culture. Suggestions have been made that this density is related to the slave trade, to the particular ecological conditions that existed in Ibo country, and so on, but no really adequate analysis of the matter has been made. Such research is important to an understanding of the population pattern that is developing today and also in terms of general theories of population development and social change.

5. A related problem is that of the reasons for the variations in land settlement patterns in different parts of Ibo country. Both Jones (1949b) and Morgan (1956a, 1956b, 1957) have worked on this problem, but further systematic coverage and analytical work is needed. An adequate understanding of the cultural and geographic factors influencing Ibo settlement patterns and population density could add greatly to theories of ecological adjustments of societies in tropical lands.

B. Ethnographic and Sociological Studies.

Accurate ethnographic data are lacking on virtually all Ibo groups; as Forde and Jones' study (1950) clearly indicates. There is a strong need for intensive localized full-scale ethnographic research in most Ibo areas. The writer would single out the following regions as being most crucial and as representing different types of Ibo society and culture:

1. A Northeastern Ibo group, either Izi or Ezza.
2. Ohaffia.
3. Aro Chuku.
4. A Northern Ibo group, possibly Agbaja, or a continuation of the work commenced by Horton at Nike.

5. Ugwashi Ukwu in Western Ibo country.
6. Aboh.
7. Ikwerre.

Much of the research carried out in Ibo country has been in the more central areas, Owerri and Awka, for example. Traditional ethnographic research in these central areas is now becoming difficult as a result of the rapid pace of social change, though it is by no means impossible. A study of some of the major Ibo groups as yet virtually unstudied would form a solid base for further problem-oriented research, historical studies, and applied programs.

In addition, there are no detailed studies of Ibo religion and ritual, or of Ibo secret societies, though the latter often played a crucial role in village life. Despite the fact that Ibo carvers are as renowned as those from other areas of Africa few accurate studies of Ibo art have been made. Virtually nothing is known about traditional Ibo patterns of warfare or of traditional trading practices and organizations. No adequate studies of Ibo age grades have ever been produced.

C. Historical and Archaeological Analyses.

These are separated from theoretical problems because while they are important they do not so clearly lend themselves to questions of theoretical importance to the social scientist. They nevertheless require as astute gathering of data and as rigorous analysis.

1. There is a great deal of interest in Nigeria in the origin of the Ibo, among Europeans as well as Africans. At present the problem is insoluble because of the lack of written records that go back sufficiently in time. There is no sufficient systematic knowledge of local traditions of migration, and those that have been recorded in the ethnographic data and in unpublished Intelligence Reports and other files have never been systematically analysed. Furthermore, the study of origins is hampered by the lack of ethnographic information on neighboring groups, for example, Ibibio, Cross River peoples, Ijaw, and Kalabari, through whom some attempts at traditional cultural area analysis could be carried out. The clearest knowledge lies in the area of linguistics, in which there seems to be little dispute as to the linguistic ties of the Ibo to the Kwa language group, which includes Kru, Agni-Twi, Yoruba, and other groups to the west of the Ibo. But linguistic evidence alone is never sufficient. Some very general facts are known, of course, about Ibo origins. Ibo migrations have tended to be small-scale and comparatively short in distance. There is clear evidence of outward expansion to the west, north, northeast, and south. This process of border expansion is still going on today. There has been some absorption of non-Ibo people into Ibo society as a result of these expansions, and there is some evidence of strong non-Ibo influence on the Ibo, particularly in the Onitsha area. It is possible that Ibo society originated somewhere in the Owerri-Umuahia area, though there is as yet no firm evidence for this. Certainly in the center

of Ibo country traditions of movement seem to be less well developed than in the border areas. It is possible that present-day Ibo culture is an amalgam of a number of cultures in which one language, Ibo, became dominant. All these questions remain to be solved.

2. There seems to have been one Ibo group which differed considerably from others in cultural features and which acted as a major unifying factor in Ibo society, at least during the days of the European slave trade. This is the Aro group, consisting of the home villages at Aro Chuku and the many Aro settlements scattered through Ibo country. Despite the fact that this group is of great importance in Iboland there has been no real anthropological research carried out at Aro or with Aro settlements in other areas of Ibo country, and there is strong need for further historical analysis as well. Such studies also would relate to historical studies of the role of Eastern Nigeria in the slave trade.¹

3. There are strong suggestions of Bini influence at Onitsha, Nri-Awka, and other nearby areas where centralized local governments with rituals apparently patterned after Benin seem to have developed. R. Bradbury, working with the Scheme for the Study of Benin History and Culture has already carried out some preliminary research into this question, but it is in need of more full-scale analysis. Similar border contacts between Ibo and the Moslem north, Ibo and non-Ibo in the Cross River area, and Ibo and Delta peoples could be explored.

4. In conjunction with the above and other proposed studies, archival material in the Nigerian National Archives, as well as elsewhere in Nigeria and in England and Scotland, needs to be carefully sifted and catalogued, so that the potential resources available for historical research can be indicated. A great deal of useful work needs to be done on the role of missions in the early development of the country, as well as on the influence of the early trading companies, and much of this kind of research would depend upon documentary material.

5. Archaeological research carried out in recent years in Western and in Northern Nigeria has added unexpected time depth to studies of the development of these areas. The important archaeological research carried out in Ibo country at Igbo-Ukwu is very exciting and suggestive. There is every reason to believe that similar research in other Ibo areas would prove of value, whether metal objects are discovered or not. Even with only very meager kinds of artifacts, mainly stone and potsherds, that are likely to survive in Ibo country, and with defense ditches, house and other walls that are likely to leave evidence on the ground, a great deal of information about types

¹ V. A. Ikoku at the University College, Ibadan, has recently organized an Aro research project in which students are working on historical and cultural problems of the Aro.

of settlement patterns, population size, and modes of livelihood can be gained. These data are necessary for an understanding of the culture base from which historical and modern Ibo society developed. One might hypothesize for example, that before the European slave trade Ibo society was small in geographic area and that numerous diverse cultural groups speaking different languages lived side by side with the Ibo, much as there is a diversity of peoples in the Obubra area today. The European slave trade led to a rapid rise in population in the area with a great deal of shifting of population. The introduction of a variety of South American food plants as a result of contact with the Western Hemisphere led to an increased diversity of agricultural production and created possibilities of sustaining an increased population. The Ibo spread and absorbed surrounding groups in response to this total situation. There is no way of judging the validity of such arguments as these. They are meant only to suggest that sound archaeological research can provide valuable data in checking such theories.

D. Present-Day Social Problems.

The variety of potential studies falling under this heading is great. Most of the research topics listed under Theoretical Problems belong here as well. Answers to these problems and others suggested below should be of importance in determining present-day policies and directions of development for government and other organizations.

1. The study of the process of urbanization among the Ibo should be a priority topic. Fifty years ago there were virtually no Ibo cities. Today there are dozens of them. For a society that had no tradition of urban life the change has been striking. Even more remarkable, perhaps, has been the willingness of the Ibo to leave their own area to migrate to cities in other sections of Nigeria, where they often form a significant "stranger" population. Important problems for research are what forms Ibo urban life takes and why, and what administrative steps are necessary for the sensible improvement of urban centres. The Nigerian administrative service, both in practice and in training, has in the past been geared to rural problems and rural development. It should be emphasized that a somewhat different tradition of government and administrative guidance is necessary in the urban communities than in rural areas. Studies of actual social conditions in urban centres are necessary today to help guide government along reasonable lines of action. Urban areas in Ibo country have sprung up with little or no planning (except in the "European" quarters) and with little understanding of the nature of urban life. Urban problems may at times seem unexciting to the social scientist, particularly if they are concerned with such things as sanitation and housing conditions, but they remain real problems nevertheless, and the urban administrator is in need of experienced social researchers, particularly those who are familiar with urban problems in other areas of the world.

2. It is likely that eventually the patterns of land ownership in Ibo country will have to be modified, and a system of land registration introduced. This is not because there is anything inherently wrong with the traditional patterns. Rather, it has been the experience of persons working in other non-Western societies that as these societies adopt modern economic, social, and political ways of life that the traditional land system, in its purest forms, becomes incompatible with these other changes. It is largely a matter of time and convenience as to when changes in the land pattern begin to occur, and perhaps also of whether there is strong governmental control of these changes or they develop naturally as a result of local pressures. In either case there is clearly a considerable need for data on traditional forms of land ownership—the particulars of Ibo land controls—and on what changes are already occurring. Certainly in township and city areas special problems of land registration and ownership already have had to be met. Similar problems are beginning to appear in rural areas as well.

3. Important changes are occurring in patterns of family life and child rearing practices. There is considerable curiosity among Nigerians concerning European and American family organization and behavior. Economic and religious pressures are changing traditional patterns of family behavior, and the status of women in the family is gradually undergoing a reorganization. There is some need for family counseling centers in Ibo areas, particularly in urban centers. These can best operate on the basis of knowledge gained through research on traditional and changing family systems.

4. What, one may ask, is the effect of education on Ibo society? And what are the best ways to educate persons belonging to this particular cultural tradition? One notes a strong sense of routinization in education in Ibo areas, and a rather willing acceptance of traditional educational techniques and methods. There are reasons for this—the influence of the British tradition of education and the lack of financial resources. But education in Ibo country could benefit greatly by a sense of experimentation in educational techniques, by attempts to discover what the students actually *do* learn in schools (or do not), and it is not likely that examination scores give adequate answers to these questions. There is also a need for research into teaching techniques and student response. All this costs money, but clearly money is being wasted on the present education system because of its inadequacies, and, of course, so is potential trained manpower. It is suggested that the social scientist can make extremely useful contributions here at a time when the training system is still not completely committed to a single philosophy of education.

5. Modern Local Government has now been in existence in Ibo country for a number of years. Certain serious problems have arisen. These include problems of the relationships and degree of contact of local government councillors with their electors, the position of local government in relation to the expanding forces of the regional government, and the question of some mismanagement in council activities.

Clearly local government in Ibo country, while it is here to stay, is not turning out to be what the British administrators in the early 1950's had hoped it would be, that is, similar to local government in England. It is not a question of whether it should or should not be similar (the writer would argue that it should not) so much as a question of the need for stocktaking in terms of what should be the function of local government in the *developing* political and economic situation. In such a stocktaking research by social scientists could play a useful role.

III

No suggestions will be made here as to how research of the types indicated in the preceding section should be carried out. There are reasons to believe that some sort of organization such as the Benin or Yoruba historical research programs would be of great value, and further, that an ongoing research program emanating from the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, and also, perhaps, from University College, Ibadan, would be of great value. There is every reason to hope that the Eastern Nigerian Government would consider certain types of projects of value to them and be willing to support them. As a visitor to Nigeria the writer makes these suggestions on the basis of his own personal experiences. The list of possible research projects and problems is meant only to be suggestive—there are doubtless many other important ones. Again, there is no intention to be derogatory toward work already accomplished. It is simply that there is a considerable need for further research. It should be emphasized that while the writer writes of the Ibo from personal knowledge, he is acutely aware that very similar problems are found among other groups in southeastern Nigeria, indeed in all Nigeria, and that similar patterns of research needs exist for these other groups. It is not intended to imply that it is only among the Ibo that research needs are to be found.

Research of the kinds indicated above will be of great help in finding practical solutions to difficult problems that are now being faced, and such research adds to our general knowledge and understanding of African societies, to our theories concerning the manner in which all societies function. Finally, there is that very important part of the process of nation building which involves the development of a sense of national and local identity, of a sense of the past, of the importance of tradition. There is no independent country that has not so developed a sense of what it values in its history. Research, both by Nigerians and by persons from other countries, can help in this very important process of national image-building.

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THE BENIN MISSIONS

by

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IT was primarily in quest of slaves to meet the demands of the barter trade on the Gold Coast that the Portuguese in 1485 first penetrated the coastal swamp belt and made contact with the kingdom of Benin. They rightly judged it to be the most powerful they had yet encountered in Guinea: the counterpart in that region of the Congo kingdom first visited by them only a few years earlier. A highly developed political system enabled the Oba to rule over an extensive forest state; Benin City itself bore witness to an advanced level of social and economic organisation. While the main objective of the Portuguese was the development of trade, contact with states such as Benin inevitably involved relationships of another kind because the African trade was a monopoly carefully guarded and directed by the Portuguese Crown. On the Benin side too the Oba exercised firm control over commerce with Europeans and probably enjoyed a monopoly of the most important exports of his state. From the beginning, therefore, trade implied a political relationship between the two governments. Joao Afonso de Aveiro, who led the first Portuguese party to Benin, was a gentleman of the royal household and had instructions that called for commercial and political intelligence as well as a report on the religion of Benin, for these were all matters of interest to the Portuguese government. Religion concerned them because the King of Portugal had been granted exclusive ecclesiastical patronage in Guinea, and also because, still possessed by the crusading spirit, the Portuguese were looking for allies against Islam. In this latter endeavour they sought firstly to find a sea route to the land of the Christian Emperor of Ethiopia,¹ and secondly to convert to Christianity the non-Islamic peoples they might meet in the course of exploration. Such objectives were in turn integrated with the political and commercial interests of the Portuguese government by the consideration that a people converted to Christianity would in all ways be more open to their influence than would one with whom their contacts were confined solely to trade.

¹ Envoys of the Emperor had visited Portugal at least as early as 1452 travelling by the Mediterranean and overland route, ref. Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Chronique de Guinée*, trans. L. Bourdon. Ifan, Dakar. 1960. p.47.n.i.

Benin at first aroused lively expectations. Agents of the King of Portugal found there not only slaves, pepper and a powerful state, but a divine kingship and reports of a spiritual potentate known to the Binis as *Ogane*.¹ His realm lay to the east of Benin over which he exercised some kind of suzerainty through his power of investing the Oba with the indispensable insignia of royalty. At the end of the fifteenth century it was already an ancient custom that when an Oba died his successor sent messengers with valuable gifts to this *Ogane*: they announced the death of their ruler and asked for the insignia in the name of the new Oba. By these same messengers the *Ogane* sent back the emblems of royalty consisting of a staff, a headpiece shaped like a Spanish helmet and a cross which the Oba wore on a chain round his neck: all were made of brass.² Enquiry also produced the information that the land of the *Ogane* lay twenty months' journey from Benin, bordering that of another powerful ruler known as *Licosago* one hundred leagues to the east.³ Because they were seeking diligently for signs of the Negus, the direction and assumed distance of the *Ogane*, and above all the Maltese-type crosses, all pointed to Prester John. The great reverence in which the Binis held the *Ogane*—"like the Pope with us"—supported their expectations. Possibly this information contributed to John II's decision to despatch Bartolomeu Dias in August 1487 in search of Prester John and India; it certainly raised hopes of missionary success in Benin, conjectured to be already under a decided, if distant, Christian influence.⁴ Misinterpretation of imperfect intelligence was from the beginning a notable characteristic of the Christian effort to convert Benin.

Through the chief of Ughoton, who had accompanied de Aveiro's party back to Portugal, and through the officials he sent to Benin to open trade, King John II exhorted the Oba to lead his subjects away

¹ João de Barros, *Da Asia*. Decade I, book iii, translation in Hodgkin, T. *Nigerian Perspectives*. O.U.P. 1960 pp.96-97. Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, translation in Hodgkin, *op. cit.* pp. 92-95.

² The messengers were given smaller crosses which conferred on them a special dignity in Benin.

³ Or approximately ten times the distance between Ughoton and Benin City which Pacheco Pereira estimated to be 9 leagues—an error of more than 50% though he had been over the road eight times! No greater reliance can be placed upon the twenty months' journey as a measure of distance: either it was a hyperbolic figure given to impress upon the Portuguese the awe-inspiring power of the *Ogane*, or else the journey was a ritual involving numerous and lengthy halts on the way.

⁴ *Ogane* is readily identifiable with the Edo word *Oghene* which has the double meaning of "high god" and "lord". In the 19th century, the German explorer Rohlf's found the forms *onagene* and *ogene* used as chieftaincy titles in the Idoma area, with *onagane* as the corresponding form of salutation. (Rohlf's, G. *Reise durch Nord Afrika*, 1865-1867. Gotha, 1872. pp.117. 120) This linguistic parallel leads in the easterly direction indicated to the Portuguese. Against it must be set the fact that the Benin dynasty claims to have originated from the town of Ife which lies to the west of Benin. Up to the time of the British

from their "heresies, gross idolatry and fetishes."¹ But these urgings did not meet in Benin the response they had awakened in the Congo. No request came for missionaries, and at the end of the fifteenth century Duarte Pacheco Pereira, who had visited Benin City four times, still complained that "the manner of life of these people is full of abuses, fetishes and idolatry."² There are, however, some grounds for believing that it was this same Oba who in 1514 sent envoys to Portugal asking for missionaries.³ The reasons behind this belated request, made some years after the Portuguese government had abandoned the Benin factory, are obscure. A genuine interest in Christianity cannot be wholly discounted, but there is little in the previous or subsequent history of Benin to suggest that it was the principal motive. More plausible is the supposition that the Oba hoped by this means to acquire firearms from the Portuguese, for these same envoys had instructions to ask for weapons, including cannon. At the time the Oba was hard-pressed by rebels or foreign enemies,⁴ yet was unable to gain the advantage of the redoubtable European weapons because the Portuguese, from prudence and papal prohibitions on the sale of arms to non-Christians, had taken care that no arms should fall into the hands of the Binis. Both obsta-

occupation of Benin, the Obas owed spiritual allegiance to the Oni of Ife, who is still called *Oghene* by the Binis, and remains of the Obas were sent to Ife for burial. Moreover, Ife is thought to have been an ancient centre of brass-casting which taught the art to Benin. Yet no crosses in brass, or in any other material, have been found there. Much more research will have to be done, especially along the Benue valley, before the mystery of the *Ogane* is solved, for its existence betokens a large, and perhaps crucial, gap in our knowledge of the Nigerian past. It may be useful to bear in mind that there are a number of Ifes, including an ancient town in the Igala area. In the Benin bronzes, figures wearing a cross round the neck always bear the "Tappa" facial markings which the Binis nowadays associate with the Nupe. ref. Temple, O. (ed. C. L. Temple) *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*. 2nd ed. Lagos, 1922. under Ife or Apa tribe who claim to have founded the Igala kingdom of Idah. Ward Price, H. L. *Dark Subjects*. London, 1939. p. 238. George, J. O. *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes*. Lagos, 1895. p.28 maintains that the original Ife lay farther north than the town which at present bears that name.

¹ Ruy de Pina, *Crónica del Rey Dom João II*. chap. 24. trans. in Hodgkin. *op.cit.*, p.97. There is an important mistake in this translation: "sent holy and most catholic advisers" should read "sent holy and most catholic admonitions". The incorrect translation is partly responsible for the erroneous belief that the Portuguese sent missionaries to Benin in 1486.

² D. Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*. ed. and trans. R. Mauny. Publicações do Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa. no.19. Bissau, 1956. p.134. Pacheco Pereira visited Benin from São Jorge da Mina.

³ ref. Bradbury, R. E. "Chronological Problems in the Study of Benin History". *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. vol. I. no.4.

⁴ Ozolua, possibly the Oba in question, died fighting against Uromi in north-east Ishan. ref. Bradbury. *op. cit.* Okojie, C. G. *Ishan Native Laws and Customs* Yaba, n. d. pp. 221-225.

cles could be overcome by conversion to Christianity.¹ Further proof of the Oba's interest in firearms is provided in the same year 1514 by the seizure, on his orders, of a cannon from a Portuguese caravel trading in the Benin River.² Possibly he hoped to learn thereby the secret of their construction so that they might be made independently by the metal-workers of Benin City, the impossibility of which must have become quickly obvious.

The Benin embassy consisted of two persons whom the Portuguese called Dom Jorge and Dom Antonio, perhaps because they were baptised Christians. After suffering an uncomfortable voyage at the hands of a rapacious captain, they reached Lisbon in a miserable condition which was only partially relieved by a small allowance from the King of Portugal.³ By the end of November 1514 they had completed their mission, but with only moderate success. Missionaries the King of Portugal readily promised and arranged that they should return to Benin with the envoys, taking with them all the necessary vestments, altar furnishings and books.⁴ Arms he refused to send until the Oba should prove the sincerity of his professed inclination to Christianity. In a letter given to the envoys, King Manuel explained his attitude to the Oba in the following terms:

...Therefore, with a very good will we send you the clergy that you have asked for; they bring with them all the things that are needed to instruct you and your people in the knowledge of our faith. And we trust in Our Lord that He will bestow His grace upon you, that you may confess it and be saved in it—for all the things of this world pass away and those of the other last for ever. We earnestly exhort you to receive the teachings of the Christian faith with that readiness we expect from a very good friend. For when we see that you have embraced the teachings of Christianity like a good and faithful Christian, there will be nothing in our realms with which we shall not be glad to favour you, whether it be arms or cannon and all other weapons of war for use against your enemies; of such things we have a

¹ Arms were readily supplied to the Congo. In 1509 the Portuguese government offered that ruler troops to put down a rebellion. ref. Brásio, A. *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*. vol. IV. Lisbon, 1954. pp. 60-62.

² Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (afterwards referred to as A.T.T.), Lisbon. *Corpo Cronologico* II. 46.165. 29 April 1514. The incident must have occurred early in 1514 or in the previous year.

³ A.T.T. *Cartas Missivas*. IV. 403. 1514. A petition from Dom Jorge asking for assistance.

⁴ In December 1514 the King ordered three chasubles, to be prepared by his wardrobe for the priests going to Benin. One was of purple satin with a centre stripe of black damask; another was of damask dyed in grain with a centre stripe of green satin, and the third was of camlet with a stripe of Bruges satin. All three were lined with buckram and fringed with red and white silk thread. The wardrobe also furnished two albs. A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. I. 16.117.

great store, as Dom Jorge your ambassador will inform you. These things we are not sending you now, as he requested, because the law of God forbids it so long as you are....¹

The Oba replied to this letter almost immediately and sent the reply to Portugal by another envoy known to the Portuguese as Pero Barroso, a Bini and probably one of the *faladors* or interpreters employed in the trade between the Portuguese and Benin.² He arrived in Lisbon in the autumn of 1515, but unfortunately neither the letter from the Oba nor King Manuel's reply have survived; most probably they continued the business of the previous exchange. When he returned to Benin, Barroso carried another letter from the King addressed to a certain Duarte Pires who was then living in Benin with another Portuguese and a converted Bini named Gregorio Lourenço who had formerly been a servant to a Portuguese in one of the islands. All three appear in some way to have been in the service of the Oba, assisting him in his campaigns. Judging by Pires' reply to the King's letter,³ it had instructed him to make proposals to the Oba on the subject of weapons and to further the work of the missionaries in every possible way. Pires replied that he had duly obeyed these orders and had received from the Oba fulsome assurances of his esteem for the King and of his goodwill towards the missionaries. Some progress had indeed been made. When they reached Benin in August 1515, the priests had found the Oba engaged in war and absent from his capital. But he immediately sent for them, and they remained in his camp, together with Pires and the other Portuguese, enjoying every mark of favour until he returned to Benin City in August 1516. The question of conversion was put off during the campaign, "because he needed leisure for such a deep mystery as this", but once in the capital, the Oba sent his own son with those of some chiefs to be baptised and taught to read by the missionaries. Reading lessons—probably with catechisms in Portuguese—progressed very satisfactorily, according to Pires. The Oba also gave orders that a church should be built in Benin City for the priests. Whether this was done is open to doubt, for although Benin tradition insists that Roman Catholic churches were built in the city, and even the sites are indicated with some precision,⁴ there is no documentary evidence for the existence of churches there. The rains

¹ A.T.T. *Fragmentos*, maço 9. The last phrase is incomplete because of a tear in the document, but the sense is clear. The letter is dated Almeirim, 20th November, 1514.

² For Pero Barroso ref. A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. I.19.62; 1.20.127, and *Gavetas*. 15.I. 49.

³ A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. I.20.118. October 1516. trans. in Hodgkin. *op.cit.* pp.99-100.

⁴ e.g. Egharevba, J. *A Short History of Benin*. 3rd ed. Ibadan, 1960. p.28. "and churches were built at Ogbelaka, Idumwerie and Akpakpava (Ikpoba Road), the last named being the "Holy Cross Cathedral".

would have made it impossible to begin the work before October 1516 when the Oba again left the city to resume the war, possibly taking the priests with him. However, it is likely that a site was allocated for the church and some building may have been completed.

A letter from the Captain of the island of Principe implies that the Oba responsible for this mission died late in 1516 or early in 1517, and presumably during the campaign he had undertaken in October 1516 in the hope of ending the war in the course of that dry season.¹ The only Oba of this period traditionally associated with a violent death is Ozolua. Benin and Ishan traditions agree that at the time of his death in the Uromi war he was very unpopular with his subjects and in particular with his war-weary soldiers who played a part in bringing about his death.² If it be postulated that the Oba who died at this time was Ozolua, the subsequent collapse of the mission might be attributed to its too close association with the person and policies of an unloved ruler. His successor, probably the son that had been baptised, was still a youth, so effective control of government passed into the hands of Osodi and Unwagwe then the two principal chiefs. These and the other chiefs may well have been antagonised by the late Oba's autocratic methods of imposing Christianity upon their sons: they now had the opportunity to put an end to such innovations.

If the identification of the Oba and the fate of the mission must remain matters of conjecture, it is certain that no record survives of its existence later than October 1516. There is reason to believe that the missionaries must have died or left Benin within the next few months because on 30 May 1517 the vicar of São Tomé, Father Diogo Bello, with three other priests arrived in Principe looking for a ship to take them to Benin where they hoped to convert the young Oba.³ They would hardly have undertaken this task had the earlier mission been still in Benin. Moreover, their purpose suggests that their predecessors had not been able to progress very far in the instruction of their converts. The vicar and his companions arranged to sail from Principe to Benin at the end of August 1517, but whether they did so is not known. Even if the mission reached Benin, it met with no recorded success. Nor for another twenty years did the Portuguese make any further attempt to convert the Oba and his people. Such Christian influence as persisted in Benin during this time was confined to a handful of Binis and slaves who had been converted while in the service of the Portuguese. For example, Gregorio Lourenço, the companion of Duarte Pires, still adhered to at least some forms of his new religion: in 1526 he gave a female slave as alms to the church of São Tomé.⁴ The books of Portuguese ships

¹ A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. I.22.69.

² ref. Egharevba. *op. cit.* p.26. cf. Okojie. *op. cit.*, pp.223-4.

³ A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. I.22.69 and I.22.72.

⁴ A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico* II.151.69. Portuguese ships trading in Benin made payments of cloth to Gregorio Lourenço which suggests that he was an interpreter.

trading to Benin also mention a Bini named Dom Antonio who may have been a Christian and, like Gregorio Lourenço, an interpreter. But without the help of priests or church their Christianity must have been of a most nominal kind.

Because the mission had failed, the Portuguese supplied no firearms to Benin. On the contrary, they took stringent precautions to prevent arms smuggling from the islands and the seizure of weapons from vessels trading in the rivers.¹ These measures were generally successful, so that even by the end of the sixteenth century Benin armies possessed only the stray firearm. Probably this lack made little difference to the military strength of the state, for its enemies and neighbours were similarly unprovided with these weapons.

The Portuguese government renewed its missionary endeavours at a time when trade with Benin had suffered a serious decline. From about 1533 French interlopers began to appear in the Bights, attacking Portuguese shipping and breaking that nation's monopoly of the Guinea trade.² At the same time, because of the Benin prohibition on the sale of male slaves, Portuguese insistence on the established maximum price of fifty manillas for a slave, and the existence of many alternative markets, the Benin trade was far less important to the Portuguese than at the beginning of the century. Ships from São Tomé and Príncipe continued to visit Benin in the later 1530s and the 1540s, usually in small fleets for greater security. But it is probable that they were mostly private ventures, and that the royal factor in São Tomé was not seriously trying to compete with the French in a market that had become relatively unimportant and unprofitable.

Knowledge of the 1538 mission rests solely upon a letter which the missionaries wrote to the King of Portugal from Benin City.³ Although the letter tells nothing about the antecedents of the mission, it would seem from internal evidence that the initiative on this occasion had come from John III of Portugal, not the Oba. The three missionaries—two Franciscans and a member of the Order of Christ—were apparently despatched on the orders of the King who had also given instructions to his factor in São Tomé to keep them supplied with provisions from the island. On their arrival early in

¹ e.g. A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. II.149. 29. 1522. The pilot of a ship bound for the Benin River is warned in his instructions not to allow any arms to be sold or stolen.

² Open French intervention in West African waters began in 1530 when letters of marque against Portuguese shipping were issued to the French shipowner Jean Ango. Two São Tomé ships were attacked near the Mahin River in 1533. A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. II. 185. 107.

³ A.T.T. *Corpo Cronologico*. I.65.57. A literal translation of the letter has been given as an appendix to this article because no English version of it has been published.

1538, they discovered that Christianity was not entirely extinct in Benin. Gregorio Lourenço was still alive. Also the Oba held captive a number of Christians, including some described as "kings", and one named Afonso Anes whom he employed to teach boys the art of reading. Above all they were counting upon support from the Oba himself for they learned from his subjects that he had been baptised in 1516 with some of his brothers.¹ Their expectation faded at the first audience which went badly, in their opinion, because they had brought no presents: a curious oversight on the part of the Portuguese. A letter of exhortation that John III had addressed to the Oba was thrown unopened into a box to the left of the throne, to be read only three months later when the missionaries succeeded in obtaining another audience. Fear of witchcraft may have accounted for such treatment of the letter, but they listed besides many other apparent proofs of the Oba's hostility. They were lodged, they complained, in a house full of idols and so noisy that they were unable to perform their devotions. Guards in constant attendance prevented them from moving freely about the city. Afonso Anes was not permitted to use the booklets of Christian doctrine specially sent by the King of Portugal for his pupils; and Gregorio Lourenço was unable to have his wives (sic) and children baptised by the priests because the Oba refused his permission. With all allowance made for exaggeration and misapprehension, this second mission obviously never enjoyed the favour shown to the first. Yet, despite all the contrived frustration, the Oba did show some curiosity about the religion to which parental authority had introduced him twenty years earlier. On his instructions, presumably at the second audience, the three Portuguese solemnly carried a cross and a statue of the Virgin to the foot of the dais on which he sat. After examining these objects carefully and feeling them all over, the Oba ordered them to be placed on the lowest step of the dais; then he permitted the missionaries to explain their doctrines. They did so in a rather minatory fashion, warning the Oba of his "perilous condition" and denouncing the practice of human sacrifice they had witnessed in his rituals. Their preaching proved ineffective, for the Oba made it clear that he did not intend to abandon his religion, nor would he again listen to them. Whenever they tried to enter the palace, they found the doors shut roughly in their faces. Much of their letter is taken up with personal denunciation of the Oba to whom are attributed all the ills of the mission. Besides permitting human sacrifice, he is accused of anointing himself with human blood, making offerings twice a day to the "enemy of mankind, the devil", persisting in "idolatries and diabolical invocations", rejoicing in Christian misfortunes, and of all the attributes of a per-

¹ The Benin king-lists agree that the Oba reigning in 1516 was still alive in 1538 (ref. Bradbury. *op. cit*), and all identify him as Esigie. Apart from this letter there is no evidence that several sons of the Oba were baptised in 1516.

fidious spirit. In the circumstances of failure, such accusations are to be expected and in part only echo earlier charges, but human sacrifice is reported for the first time as a feature of royal ceremonial in Benin. It may have been practised before this time, yet it is difficult to believe that it could have escaped the notice and condemnation of the Portuguese in earlier years when they were more closely acquainted with Benin. None of the Portuguese chroniclers, including de Barros writing about 1540, refer to human sacrifice as a practice in Benin.¹ Nor could it easily have escaped the notice of Pires, his companions and the first missionaries when for a whole year they were in constant attendance upon the Oba.² Therefore there is a possibility that it was the baptised Oba who introduced human sacrifice into his religious ceremonial as a means of enhancing his divine attributes.³

For more than twelve months the three Portuguese remained ineffectively in Benin City, surviving serious illness and gradually parting with their possessions to buy food which was scarce that year after a poor harvest. The supplies sent to them from São Tomé in 1538 had been lost when the ships carrying them were attacked by the French on their way to Benin. Another small fleet reached Benin in safety the following year, apparently without provisions for the missionaries, but offering them a means of departure. They accordingly asked the Oba for permission to leave with the ships, and for a reply to the letter they had brought from the King of Portugal. The Oba refused saying they could not leave until an envoy had arrived from the King with a letter recalling them: their subsequent importunities he referred to the chiefs responsible for trade⁴ who could obviously do nothing but repeat his refusal. Finally they had to be content with sending a letter which, after relating the fate of the mission, appeals for an armed vessel to be sent to their rescue and drive away the French interlopers. They professed a fear for their lives should the Oba decide to offer them as a sacrifice.

The Oba's insistence that the missionaries could not depart until an ambassador arrived from Portugal probably arose from the fact that he had just, or was about to, despatch envoys to John III. It is known that they were in Portugal sometime in 1540,⁵ but the purpose

¹ The voluntary entombment of favourite courtiers with a deceased Oba, reported by the Portuguese pilot as an "ancient custom", is a different matter. ref. Hodgkin. *op. cit.* p.101.

² According to Pires, "no part of his court is hidden from us, rather all the doors are open".

³ If Esigie was responsible for this innovation, it may be related to the Idah war and a changed relationship with the *Ogane* as a development of the divine kingship in Benin.

⁴ The missionaries refer to these chiefs as "the Oba's pilots": an analogy with the pilots of Portuguese trading vessels who were responsible for the conduct of trade as well as for navigation.

⁵ de Barros in Hodgkin. *op. cit.* p. 97.

of their mission can only be surmised. Almost certainly it was in part concerned with the activities of the three missionaries, and possibly to present the Oba's side of the story before they were freed to deliver their denunciations.¹ Of the result of that embassy and of the fate of the missionaries in Benin City there is no record. De Barros tells only that among the Benin envoys was an old man wearing one of the small brass crosses which the *Ogane* bestowed on those who visited him on the accession of a new Oba. This is the last reference in the written sources to the *Ogane* and to the brass crosses, and another indication that the reign of this Oba may have witnessed a fundamental development in the divine kingship.

After the failure of this second mission, the Portuguese made no further attempt for more than a century to introduce Christianity into Benin. The kings of Portugal continued to insist upon their ecclesiastical prerogative in all Guinea, but their naval and commercial power declined steadily, and such missionary endeavour as they were able to put forth in this region was fairly profitably directed towards the newly-emerged Itsekiri kingdom. French, English and Dutch merchants,² who displaced the Portuguese in the Benin trade, made no attempt to convert the Binis either to Roman Catholicism or to Protestantism. Because they were all private traders, the government-directed combination of merchant and missionary that had characterised Portuguese enterprise was not repeated by their rivals. Even during the heyday of the Portuguese monopoly, that government had been only partially successful in associating the two activities. The Portuguese sailor, official or trader showed little concern to change the religion of the peoples he met in the course of work or business; and seldom, if ever, did it prove possible to subordinate the interests of trade to those of the church.³

When the interest of the Roman Catholic Church in Benin revived in the sixteen-forties, the new impetus came not from Portugal which, after 1640, found its energies wholly occupied in the struggle with Spain at home and with the Dutch overseas, but from the Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide which had been established in Rome in 1622 to direct all missionary activities. The refusal of Rome to recognise or have any dealings with the independent Portuguese government meant that until 1668 there was hostility instead of co-operation between the two powers most interested in the conversion

¹ Similar disputes and accusations frequently arose in the Congo between the ruler and the missionaries; both parties hastened to accuse the other before the King of Portugal.

² The first English expedition to Benin was that commanded by Windam in 1533. The date of the first Dutch contact is uncertain, but it probably fell within the 1590s.

³ In Warri, for example, commercial and missionary interests were seldom reconciled. ref. Ryder, A. F. C. "Missionary Activity in the Kingdom of Warri to the Early Nineteenth Century". *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. vol. II. no.1.

of Benin. Spain did all in its power to foment bad relations between Lisbon and Rome, and tried to derive advantage from the situation by introducing direct Spanish influence into areas where Portugal had hitherto asserted exclusive ecclesiastical authority, hoping thereby to win political and economic advantage as well. Spanish designs succeeded so far that in 1648 the Sacra Congregazione assigned the Benin mission to the Capuchins of Valencia and Aragon.¹

The attention of the Sacra Congregazione had been drawn to Benin by a French Capuchin, Father Columbin of Nantes, who had been leading a French mission in West Africa between 1634 and 1640. During that time he had visited São Tomé where he gathered information about the states of the mainland, and in 1640 he had returned to his home province to seek help in what he proclaimed were promising mission fields. His letter of appeal to the Sacra Congregazione gave special prominence to the kingdoms of Benin, Ijebu, Warri and "Licomin"² which he described as

...parts of Guinea uninhabited by Portuguese. In these kingdoms live a great multitude of people who are truly gentle, civilised, friendly to priests, exemplary in their behaviour and receptive to all good teaching, so that they lack only the light of the faith, instruction and an example of true virtue. In the past some Portuguese priests were sent to this kingdom, but because of their bad example they were expelled by the king; now this same king greatly desires to have others, provided they are not Portuguese.

Confusion creeps into this letter with the change of reference from "these kingdoms" to "this kingdom": in fact, Father Columbin's information is a jumble of reports from many sources but applicable to no state in particular. Later he refers specifically to Benin:

In this kingdom the people are very easily led to embrace the Faith, and priests can live here with greater ease than in other parts of Guinea because of the healthy climate, and the fertility of the soil, and because the people are more generous. Their language is simple: it is called the Licomin language and is universally used in these parts, just like Latin in Europe. These people have their pontiffs, priests, and other ministers for the performance of their rites. The king is so greatly feared by his subjects that when they but hear his name spoken, they all fall prostrate and adore him with fear and unbelievable reverence. Thus from this it may be imagined that if the king were converted to the Faith, the rest of his subjects would easily be won over.

¹ Since the Pope still recognised Philip IV of Spain as *de jure* sovereign of Portugal, this action of the Sacra Congregazione did not legally infringe the Portuguese prerogative.

² A.S.C. *Lettere di Germania, Francia, Fiandraea, Inghilterra, 1641*. vol.83. fol. 379-80. "Licomin" was a vague name for the inland Yoruba-speaking peoples.

With such very imperfect intelligence the Sacra Congregazione organised and despatched its mission, giving the Prefect, Father Angelo de Valencia, leave to transfer to some other part of Africa should it prove impossible to enter Benin.¹

Of the twelve Spanish Capuchins assigned to the mission three died of plague while protracted negotiations over their departure were pursued between various authorities in Spain. The rest sailed from Cadiz on 2 February 1651 aboard a Dutch ship under the command of a Spanish captain.² With them went a letter to the Oba from the Sacra Congregazione and a number of presents. Instead of taking the missionaries directly to Benin, as promised, their ship spent over two months trading between Cape Palmas and Takoradi where another three weeks were occupied in getting ready a boat that had been specially built in Seville to navigate the Benin rivers. After a brush with the Dutch at Shama which ended with the Prefect and one of his company being taken prisoner to Elmina, the Spanish captain finally decided to take the remaining missionaries to the Benin River, the Prefect having transferred his authority to Father Jose de Xijona.

All the missionaries fell sick as they approached the Benin River, and by the time they reached Ughoton some were too ill to go any farther. So the Vice-Prefect took only one companion with him to Benin City. Repeated attempts to secure an audience with the Oba proved fruitless, but at last the Vice-Prefect was permitted to see an important court official to whom he handed the letter from the Sacra Congregazione asking that he would pass it to the Oba. This the chief promised to do and a few days later told Father Jose that the Oba had seen the letter and that an audience would not be necessary. Suspecting deceit, the Vice-Prefect decided to return to Ughoton to consult his companions.

Shortly afterwards the Prefect and the other Capuchin detained by the Dutch rejoined their companions at Ughoton, but found them all so sick that three, including Father Jose de Xijona, died within the space of six days. Another lay too ill to travel, so the Prefect left him in the care of two others,³ and with the remaining two members of the mission he arrived in Benin City on 10 August 1651. He too

¹ A.S.C. *Acta Generalia. Anni 1648*, fol. 45r. 86v-87r. 95r. 133v-134r, Angelo de Valencia had just returned from the Congo.

² The reports submitted to the Sacra Congregazione by members of this mission are to be found in A.S.C. *Scritture Riferite*, vol.249. Africa III. fol. 328 et seq. One is written by Felipe de Yjar, Madrid, 25 July 1654; another by Alfonso de Tolosa without date. Fr. G.A. Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, O.F.M., Cap. *Istoria Descrittione de tre Regni Congo, Matamba et Angola*. Milan, 1690. mentions another report by Bartolomeo da Viana which he used in compiling his account of the mission. Cavazzi also met the survivors when they reached Seville in 1654.

³ These three eventually joined the others in Benin City after spending four months of the rainy season in Ughoton.

encountered serious opposition when he sought an audience with the Oba, but eventually he overcame it and successfully negotiated his way through the "very odd ceremonial" that surrounded the interview. The Oba appeared amiable and interested in what the priests had to say. Moreover it was proved that he had never read the letter which the Vice-Prefect had given to the court official, because he returned it to the Prefect saying that there had been no-one available to translate it. A Portuguese was then found who knew enough of the Edo language to convey the contents which seemed to meet with the Oba's approval for he offered them lodgings within the palace so that he might talk with them more conveniently. The offer was never made good, nor did the Capuchins find it easy to renew contact with the Oba: in all they contrived to see him only twice in ten months. On the second occasion they presented their gifts to the Oba, the Iy'Oba and the most important chiefs, while the Oba gave them to understand that he would build a church and provide them with interpreters so that they might explain to him the mysteries of their religion. He even went so far as to indicate a site for the church: perhaps the one selected in 1516 and since traditionally associated with the religion of the Europeans. The mother of the Oba, the Iy'Oba, too, showed interest in the mission.

Yet this promising beginning led only into blank opposition. For several months the missionaries sought in vain for a further audience which the chief minister refused to arrange. From what they were told, they believed they had incurred the hostility of this powerful man by giving him too small a present; but it is certain that his motives were far weightier. In the name of the Oba he twice ordered them to return to Ughoton, and twice they ignored him because a brother-in-law of the Oba told them that the minister was acting on his own initiative, and that the Oba knew nothing at all of the matter.¹ In an ingenious but rather desperate attempt to break through this barrier, the Prefect presented to the Oba, through an important member of the court, an alarm-clock which worked by weights. This contraption suitably astonished the Oba who, as the Prefect had foreseen, soon sent it back to ask why it had ceased working. By offering to reveal its secret to the Oba in person, Father Angelo de Valencia hoped to meet him once more, but the chief saw through the ruse and gave back the clock, saying they would manage without it.

Finding their hopes of converting the Oba frustrated, the Capuchins turned their attention to his subjects, but again they were confounded. On one side they were not permitted to leave Benin City in order to visit any other part of the kingdom. On the other, they could make no progress even within the city because they could speak no Edo and the interpreters promised by the Oba were never

¹ It is very possible that this powerful minister was also the official who had received the letter from the Vice-Prefect and prevented him meeting the Oba.

provided. Those Binis who knew Portuguese proved unsuitable as interpreters, doubtless because they had orders to give no assistance. The missionaries accordingly tried to teach themselves Edo by building a vocabulary, but before they had progressed far, a chief came to explain that "the devil had told the Binis of their desire to learn the language and had given warning that anyone who taught them so much as a single word would be beaten to death". After that they found no more informants. As their hopes diminished, so did their supplies of food and money, and in the last months they would have been in dismal straits but for foodstuffs and a barrel of cowries given by some English traders.

Despite these frustrations and handicaps, the Spaniards managed with clandestine lessons from a Portuguese to learn enough of the language to make one final effort to speak to the Oba. They chose the occasion of a major ceremony involving human sacrifice when it would be possible for them to join the crowds flocking into the palace. From the indications of time given in their reports, this ceremony must have taken place in May 1652 and was probably the *ugie-ivie* ritual at which sacrifices were made over the Oba's coral regalia.¹ Two of the missionaries, the Prefect and Father Felipe de Hajar, went to the palace and waited by the main gate for an opportunity to enter. This is Father Felipe's account of what happened:

The chief men of the city, who, the natives say, number more than two thousand, were entering the palace, all wearing the various costumes appropriate to the ceremony. They went in until they filled the four courtyards of the palace, and as it was now one o'clock and the palace was crowded, we entered the first courtyard. Among those who were watching us was a venerable old man who, by his outward appearance, seemed a veritable St. Peter. He made a sign to us that we should follow him. We were amazed because we had never seen him before that moment, and also because the negroes had always taken care that we should not see the sacrifices. In the end we went with the old man from one courtyard to another until we reached the last one where, of his own accord, he told us to stand under the gallery of the courtyard. In the middle of the gallery we found a table on which lay the scimitars² that were to be used to decapitate five men and five animals of every species found in that country. We waited for a favourable moment, and when it came we stepped out into the open courtyard which, like the others in the palace, was

¹ ref. Bradbury, R. E. *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*. London, 1957. p.59. In the nineteenth century, at least, this ceremony took place at the shrine of the Oba Ewuare. On 14th May 1787, the Frenchmen Landolphe, Legroing and Balon witnessed what was possibly the same ceremony. Labarthe, P. *Voyage à la côte de Guinée* Paris, 1803. Letter XVIII.

² They would be *ada*.

filled with the most important men attending upon the king at the sacrifice. But before they could begin to destroy those poor men and innocent animals, we began speaking to the king and chiefs of the evil they were doing in making such sacrifices, of the state of perdition in which they stood, that the devil whom they served was deceiving them, and so forth. But we had hardly spoken when the barbarous idolaters rushed furiously upon us and bore us through the courtyard with much violence; they did not stop until they had thrust us out and closed the door. When we tried a second and a third time to re-enter the courtyard with those who were still going in, they prevented us. Finally they drove us out of the palace altogether. Around the gate was gathered a huge crowd who mocked us all the way to our house.

That same evening we were still lamenting our lack of success and the perdition of these heathens, when ten ministers¹ of the king arrived to tell us that we must leave Benin immediately, for they did not wish us to interfere with the sacrifices that they made to the devil. That night we were kept under guard, and the next day they lured Father Angelo de Valencia and myself out of the house by trickery² and took us to a grove where we remained in the company of five leopards who watched us.³ They gave us nothing to eat so that we should suffer a little. At the end of four days they took us to a place called Gotto and there we were kept prisoner for a month and a half until our companions had arrived there with the goods belonging to the mission. From there we passed to another place in the same kingdom called Arbo where we stayed six months. Then, seeing that we could achieve nothing there, we determined to leave aboard an English ship that took us to the island of Principe which is Portuguese territory.

This account gives the impression that the Bini authorities were more concerned to prevent the missionaries interfering with the established religion in Benin City than to drive them wholly from the kingdom.

What befell those left behind in Benin City is described in the report made by one of them, Alfonso de Tolosa, to the Sacra Congregazione. They suffered great hardship from want of provisions, but not, it would seem, from ill-treatment. They were obviously not under close guard, for at night they were able to visit the Iy'Oba and the Oba's

¹ Probably they were messengers.

² According to Cavazzi *op.cit.*, these two were told to go to the palace for an audience with the Oba; but once there they were taken prisoner.

³ ref. Dapper, O. *Naukerige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten*. Amsterdam, 1668, p. 502 for a description of the tame leopards kept by the Oba. From the account given in Cavazzi, this grove would seem to have been a shrine. Among other ritual objects, the two Capuchins found there a calabash of palm wine which the Prefect drank to demonstrate that the spirit of the shrine could not harm him. This action only antagonised their guards still further.

brother-in-law who had helped them in the past. By this time they had abandoned all hope of making conversions in Benin City and their object was to rejoin their companions at Ughoton. Through the intercession of the Oba's relatives they finally obtained permission to depart, and canoes to carry them all from Ughoton to Arbon¹ where there were Dutch and English factories. The Iy'Oba also gave them some food.

If the Capuchins had understood aright, both relatives of the Oba expressed sympathy for them and their mission, and the Oba himself had been friendly on the two occasions when they had met him in formal audience. Of the Benin people too Father Felipe had formed a favourable opinion:

....they are wholly illiterate, nevertheless they have many natural gifts: they behave very well, and they know that the Devil is evil and that God is good. But they serve the Devil for the fear they have of him that if they do not do as he bids, he will punish them severely.²

So, despite their failure, the missionaries were convinced that the cause was not hopeless and that all depended on winning over the Oba who, they were persuaded, could be easily converted, provided they had access to him and could learn the language well enough to dispense with interpreters. It does indeed appear probable that their greatest enemies had not been the Oba but powerful chiefs at court, who allowed the Oba to see and hear only what they thought fit. Such a situation accords well with the view expressed in Dapper³ that effective power lay in the hands of the chief ministers or counsellors: Unwagwe, Osodi and Eribo, the leaders of the palace associations of Iwebo and Ibiwe. Father Angelo de Valencia in his report to the Sacra Congregazione went still further:

He (i.e. the Oba) showed himself well disposed to hear the arguments for our Holy Faith: but he lacks the liberty to follow his laudable inclinations because he is hemmed in on all sides by certain ministers who wholly prevent strangers, and especially

¹ The missionaries estimated Arbon to lie 20 leagues downriver from Ughoton. Dapper gives the same estimate. Arbon must have stood near the junction of the Ughoton Creek with the Benin River. Dutch and English factories were established there in the 1640s. While the missionaries were in this place a serious fire broke out and threatened to destroy everything. Amid the panic, Father Bartolomeo da Viana took up his stand at one end of the village and invoked the name of Jesus. The wind providentially changed direction and the fire spread no further. But even this happening brought the missionaries small credit with the inhabitants.

² In Dapper there is a very similar estimate of Bini religion.

³ Dapper, *op. cit.* p.502. This information was gathered in the 1640s.

Europeans, from approaching him precisely because of a fear that they might speak to him about religion.¹

Egharevba's portrait of Ahenzae, the Oba who by his reckoning was reigning at this time, lends further weight and clarity to these contemporary estimates of the Oba's power:²

He was only sixteen years old when he was crowned. Many took advantage of his youthfulness so that the long-stored treasures of the former kings was wasted. The royal coral beads were gambled away in games of dice with Osuan.³

In other words, this ruler was an ineffectual character whose weakness was encouraged by his courtiers for their own advantage, which was also served by his rigid ritual seclusion. Because royal authority had sunk to such a low level, it is extremely doubtful whether the missionaries were justified in expecting so much from it. One of them summed up their argument in this manner:

The reason why these negroes cannot embrace the Faith, as they would wish to do, is that they consider themselves slaves of their king and would not dare to become Christians until the king himself is converted.

Their own experience would suggest a very different conclusion: the Oba was held in thrall by a ceremonial religion, apart from which he could exercise but little influence over his people. It may well be doubted whether even at a time when the Oba had wielded considerable political power, as in 1515, he could, by his will alone, have abandoned the religion of his state.

In the island of Principe the Capuchins heard, seemingly for the first time, about the Christian Olu of Warri and the progress made there by Portuguese missionaries. They realised then that in Rome the two states had been confused and that the Christian antecedents of Warri had been falsely attributed to Benin. The lack of clarity in Father Columbin's letter must be held partly responsible, while the state of war between Spain and Portugal made it impossible to obtain more accurate information. Once they understood the true position, the Spaniards tried to reach Warri, for besides succouring the Christ-

¹ Cavazzi gives another explanation for the seclusion of the Oba: a prophecy was current in Benin to the effect that an Oba would be killed by a European, and so, to ward off this danger, foreigners were not permitted to speak with the Oba save as a very special favour. Even then he did not meet them face to face, but heard them from within a small room which was heavily guarded. Cavazzi read of this custom in a Dutch book and received confirmation of it from several Portuguese who knew Benin well. The "very odd ceremonial" which accompanied the Prefect's audience may have been related to this practice. I have been unable to trace the Dutch reference.

² Egharevba, *op.cit.* p. 35. All the Obas of the mid-seventeenth century are shadowy, short-reigning figures in Benin tradition.

³ Osuan was the priest of a royal god and would presumably have used his considerable influence with the Oba against the mission.

ian community there, they believed that a mission based in that kingdom "would be the best means of converting Benin because the two kingdoms are neighbours and it would be possible to learn the language of Benin in Warri". But the attempt failed because the Portuguese governor of São Tomé, although friendly to the Capuchins, had to treat them as subjects of an enemy power and send them to Lisbon.

The Sacra Congregazione did not regard this mission as a failure: from the reports received, there seemed to be a good prospect of wholesale conversion given unhindered access to the Oba's goodwill. Warri offered a secure and convenient base. Without delay, therefore, a new mission designated the Mission to Warri and Benin was established in June 1655.¹ Appreciating the need for Portuguese support, especially in Warri, the Sacra Congregazione took the mission from the Spaniards and appointed instead twelve Italian Capuchins under an Italian Prefect, Father Giovanni Francesco a Roma, another veteran of the Congo mission. Furthermore, when the missionaries left Italy, they went to Lisbon in order to make their voyage on a Portuguese ship. Despite these conciliatory gestures, the Portuguese government remained suspicious and would allow only four of the company to depart. Among those turned back was the Prefect who handed over his authority, and the letters he carried for the rulers of Benin and Warri, to a Corsican priest, Father Angelo Maria d'Ajaccio. The reduced party went first to São Tomé, and two were finally permitted to go on to Warri. But they never reached Benin, for on their return to São Tomé, they were arrested and suspended from their mission by the Vicar-General of that island. In 1662 they were shipped back to Lisbon. Resentment among the local clergy at foreign interference in the diocese no doubt helped to bring the mission to this unhappy end: another factor was official suspicion that the missionaries had come to spy on the little trade left to the Portuguese on the West African coast.²

Father Angelo Maria did, however, contrive to have delivered to the Oba the letter from the Sacra Congregazione. To this the Oba made an encouraging reply, promising to receive the mission into his kingdom. So, once he and his companions had been cleared of all charges against them in Lisbon, the Prefect urged upon the Sacra Congregazione the need to follow up his success in Warri and send a new mission to Benin. In October 1663 he asked for at least another four helpers and further letters to the Oba and the Olu, "so that they may know what report of them has been given to the Holy See and be the more inspired to protect the missionaries". Eight Capuchins were accordingly appointed to join the mission, but the Portuguese

¹ A.S.C. *Acta Generalia. Anni. 1655.* 15 June 1655. xxv.

² For more details of this mission ref. Cavazzi *op. cit.* Also A.S.C. (*Acta Generalia. Anni. 1663.* 10 April 1663. fol. 86r-v. and Arquivo Historico Ultramarino (afterwards referred to as A.H.U.) Lisbon. São Tomé. caixa 2. 13 May 1657. Governor of São Tomé to the King of Portugal.

government again changed its mind, refused to grant any passports, and so prevented the Oba's expressed readiness to receive a mission from being put to the test.

Discouraged by Portuguese obstruction, for twenty years the Sacra Congregazione made no further attempt to revive the Benin mission, until in 1683 Giovanni da Romano, the Prefect of the Capuchin mission in Angola, took the initiative, this time with the blessing of Portugal. Giovanni da Romano first communicated his project to the Prince Regent of Portugal and had him write a letter of recommendation to the Bishop of São Tomé. After telling the Bishop about the intended mission, the letter continued:

Should any of these priests come to that territory (i.e. São Tomé) in order to travel to the coast and the kingdoms of Benin and Warri and conduct the mission there, we command you, not only that you do not hinder them, but rather lend them every assistance and favour.¹

A major handicap to earlier missions was thus removed, and a new period opened of missions sponsored jointly by the Sacra Congregazione and the Crown of Portugal, though the latter still abated none of its claims to patronage.

In June 1684 an Italian Capuchin, Francesco da Monteleone, arrived in São Tomé to establish there a base for the missions to the mainland.² Difficulties soon gathered: the death of the bishop of the island in 1685 threw a heavy burden of pastoral duties upon Monteleone, and the Prefect of the Angola mission found it impossible to send the promised help. He had, however, won the support of the local Portuguese authorities to the extent that the Governor and Chapter of São Tomé both requested the Sacra Congregazione to send him eight Capuchins for the missions to Benin, Warri and Ardra. Rome sent three men and raised the status of the mission to that of a prefecture with Monteleone as Prefect. But only one of these three reached São Tomé alive in April 1687, and he died three years later. Another eight arrived in January 1691; three died within a few days, and by 1693 only three remained alive. Faced with such difficulties, it was not until 1689 that Monteleone was able to begin his missionary work with a visit to Warri. From there he tried to reach Benin:

they took me by river to the borders of Benin where there is a powerful chief who is in rebellion against Warri, and he was to take me on to Benin. But he was afraid that the king of Warri

¹ A. H. U. codice 489. *Registo de officios para São Tomé e Cabo Verde, 1673-1716*. fol. 38r. 20 March 1683.

² The letters from Father Francesco da Monteleone to the Sacra Congregazione are to be found in A.S.C. *Scritture riferite nei Congressi, Africa, Angola, Congo, Senegal. a. 1686-92*. vol. II. fol. 479-80v. 25 April 1691; fol. 501. 25 July 1691; fol. 553. 19 March 1692; fol. 585-86v. 24 May 1692; fol. 608. 28 August 1692; and in *Scritture riferite...a. 1693-1710*. vol. III. fol. 37-39. 4 April 1693; fol. 105-6. 14 June 1694; fol. 109-10. 25 August 1694.

might have his head cut off, as he had done to his father, so he would not let us disembark. When the Bini officials heard of this, they immediately sent canoes to fetch me and carry me to Benin. But they did not find us because we had returned to Warri without delay.

He did however succeed in making contact with some subjects of the Oba whom he describes as the "Oriboo and Mabbor" peoples. These he was able to visit directly from Warri,¹ so it is possible that they were Urhobo settlements on the Benin River. By his own estimation, his teaching met with a favourable reception from these people, and it was presumably from this acquaintance that he drew his estimate of missionary prospects in Benin:

I consider the people of Benin kinder, politer, more faithful and more reasonable than the people of Warri. It only needs the king to give the word that they should become Christians and all, all will embrace the Faith.

Fired with enthusiasm, Monteleone returned to São Tomé to organise missions for Benin and Warri. He first intended that two priests should go to each kingdom, but the plan miscarried owing to the refusal of the Vice-Prefect, Gioseppe de Busseto, to undertake the Benin mission on the grounds that the Oba had not been baptised. As Vice-Prefect he preferred, and claimed the right, to go to Warri where he would be certain of a friendly reception. Monteleone took the view that Busseto, as the senior member of the mission, must go to Benin, otherwise the Oba would take offence. The Oba would be equally offended, he argued, if the Vice-Prefect visited Warri before Benin, because relations between the two states were very strained: "they are not exchanging ambassadors, and the people of Warri cannot go to Great Benin, but only to two areas called Oriboo and Mabor which are far from Benin; everywhere else they are resorting to arms".² The Vice-Prefect would not yield, so, rather than prejudice the future of the mission, Monteleone decided to send no-one to Benin until the opportunity came for him to lead a mission there in person. In the meantime he sent a letter to the Oba by the captain of the Portuguese ship that carried the missionaries to Warri in August 1691.³ By the same ship the Oba replied that he was very ready to receive a mission and that he was especially anxious to meet Monteleone: he would give a house and all necessary provisions to any priests who might come. Although friendly, the letter remained non-committal and did not justify Monteleone's conclusion that "the king of Great Benin has taken counsel with all his chiefs and has sent a

¹ Not the present town of that name, but the old capital, Ode Itsekiri.

² These were the beginnings of the great civil war that devastated Benin at the end of the seventeenth century.

³ By this time Portuguese ships from the islands and Brazil were again regularly visiting Benin to buy slaves. This ship, after landing the priests at Ode Itsekiri, passed through the creeks into the Benin River.

message that I should go to his kingdom, for they will accept what is preached to them". For some time this eagerness to seize the fancied opportunity was frustrated by a lack of helpers that was not satisfied until late in 1694 or early 1695 when another body of Capuchins reached São Tomé. On 8 September 1695 he left for Benin with at least one companion. But he never reached Benin City, for he fell mortally ill at Ughoton where he died in mid-November of that same year.

It is not known whether any of the Prefect's companions succeeded in making their way to Benin City at this time: if they did, they achieved nothing. Writing to the Sacra Congregazione in September 1696, the Vice-Prefect of the mission had only this to say about Benin:¹

In the kingdom of Benin no good can be done for the moment, since it has been almost destroyed by the wars which have been waged among those negroes: for more than seven years they have been destroying each other. If peace is restored, I shall not fail to do everything possible for the service of God and the salvation of those poor souls.

Whether, as in 1515, there was any connection between the Oba's willingness to receive missionaries and his military difficulties must remain a matter of conjecture. If there was a connection, it is unlikely that it was related to the supply of firearms, for in the 1690s the Dutch had begun selling guns in Benin in the normal course of trade.² On the other hand, it is possible that questions of religion were involved in the issues of the civil war. It is remarkable, for example, that no mention of human sacrifice occurs in Nyendael's generally unflattering description of Benin. Still more significantly, he writes that in May 1702 he attended the "coral feast" (*ugie-ivie*) but says nothing about human sacrifice which had been a central feature of that ceremony fifty years earlier.

A little further light falls on this question during the final phase of missionary activity which began in 1709 with a visit to Benin by the new Capuchin Prefect of the mission, Father Cipriano de Napoli. According to Francesco de Collevecchio, one of the priests who accompanied the Prefect, the Oba showed no interest whatsoever in the mission:³

...after we had been there many days, the king and his chiefs would not in any manner receive missionaries; the king would not even give the Prefect an audience. So, realising the impossi-

¹ A.S.C. *Scritture riferite...a.1693-1710*. vol. III. fol.137-8. Father Angelico da Pettineo to Sacra Congregazione, São Tomé, 4 September 1696.

² Until this time no European nation had regularly supplied firearms to Benin. About 1700 Nyendael (in Bosman, W. *Nauwkeurige Beschryving van de Guinese Goud-Tand-en Slave Kust*. Amsterdam, 1718. p. 247). remarked that the Binis did not like firearms and were very inexpert in their use.

³ A.S.C. *Scritture riferite nei Congressi, Africa etc.* vol.III fol.475. 20 January 1710.

bility of doing any good there, the Prefect left in the ship that had brought him, together with the Brothers.

Since this report to the Sacra Congregazione is signed by four of the Capuchins, it may reasonably be accepted as correct. In the following year, however, the Oba wrote letters to the Pope, the Sacra Congregazione and the Procurator-General of the Capuchin Order all of which reveal an astonishing change of policy. That written to the Pope is the most circumstantial.¹

Blessed Father,

Today, thanks be to God, I acknowledge myself the most humble son of Your Holiness whom I revere as the Vicar of Christ, and whose Holy Benediction I reverently and earnestly ask. In myself and in all my subjects there dwells a desire to embrace the Faith of Christ, a desire which has long been lighted in us, as it was in the time of my father, who was of the same mind thanks to the edifying example set us in past years by some Italian Capuchins who passed through this kingdom on their way to the kingdom of Warri. That our conversion was not accomplished at that time did not arise from any lack of care or preaching by the said Fathers, but from the wars which were raging throughout my kingdom. So when the Prefect, Father Cypriano a Napoli, who in the past year worked among us to that end, found that the difficulties caused by the war had been removed, he returned to the island of São Tomé, full of a firm hope in God, that neither his labours nor our desires should be wanting of their effect. Now the Divine Mercy has deigned to shine upon us, for the aforesaid Prefect has sent us two Fathers whom we have received cordially; both I and my chiefs have taken them to our hearts and follow their counsels. Moreover I have given orders that they should be assigned a site and a house suitable for their abode and for other Fathers who may be summoned here in future. These have been given them by a public deed of gift, so that they may use them freely, dwell there and labour in the worship of God. But considering the vast extent of my kingdom, a greater number of workers is needed for the labour of the Gospel. Therefore, with the utmost devotion, I pray that Your Holiness may deign to send more priests for the furtherance of so holy a work, and be assured that I for my part will see that everything needful is provided which concerns the worship of God and the needs of their own persons. By this same occasion I submit myself in obedience to Holy Mother Church and to Your Holiness whom I acknowledge as head of the Church and lord of this my kingdom. May God prosper Your Holiness, whose sacred feet I kiss with all reverence. In the Kingdom of Benin, 2 November 1710,

the unworthy and humble son etc.,
Obba, King of Benin.

¹ A Latin version is given in Michael a Tugio, *Bullarium Ordinis FF. Praedicatorum*. Rome, 1729. tom. VII. pp. 232-3.

Clearly the Oba did not write this letter; most probably it is the work of the two Capuchins to whom it refers, and it might be dismissed as a forgery designed to boost the reputation of their Order did there not exist strong confirmatory evidence of its substance. Some support is lent by a letter from the Portuguese Secretary of State Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real to the Capuchin Superior. It reports that the Oba has written to the king of Portugal announcing the reception into his kingdom of the Capuchin mission and asking for more priests; the king of Portugal urges the Superior to meet this request and if necessary ask Rome to provide the Province of Portugal with the men.¹ The most important evidence, however, for the truth of the letters concerns the Oba's grant of land to the mission. On 19 April 1712, the Portuguese Council for Overseas Affairs wrote as follows to the Governor of São Tomé:²

Father Sipriano de Napoles Prefect of the Capuchin missionaries in that island has informed me in a letter of 28 April of the past year, that he has sent two priests of the mission to the kingdom of Benin where they were so well received by the king and his chiefs that he at once ordered them to be given houses and a site for building a church. This same king has assured me of the same in a letter which he wrote to me, and he appears inclined to accept the Catholic faith. Because in his letter he gives the impression that he has received the said priests in the name of the Sacra Congregazione, I order you to obtain all the necessary information concerning the manner in which the said Fathers accept and settle the grant to them of this site, and report your findings to me.

On the same day the Council, in the name of the king of Portugal, wrote also to the Prefect ordering that if the land had been accepted in the name of the Sacra Congregazione, "you will immediately tear it (i.e. the deed) up and see that another is made in which it shall be stated that it is accepted in my name...because it is for me alone to send missionaries to that kingdom as I am its lawful patron".³ Father Cipriano replied on 19 January 1713 that he had instructed the Superior of the Benin mission to destroy the offending document and obtain another in the terms demanded.⁴ Yet further evidence is provided by the Capuchin Filippo Calvello who returned to Italy from São Tomé in 1713. He reported that the Oba had received the two missionaries courteously and given them a house, but he felt pessimistic about the future of the mission because, he thought, the

¹ Michael a Tugio. *op. cit.* tom.VII. p.233. The letter is dated Lisbon, 15 March 1714.

² A. H. U. codice 489, fol. 236r

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* fol 243r Lisbon, 6 September 1713. This is the reply from the Council to the Prefect's letter.

Benin people were too steeped in idolatry and superstition.¹

There is, then, good reason to believe that in 1710 a Capuchin mission was established in Benin City with a degree of support from the Oba such as no other mission had enjoyed since 1515. Unless some mission has completely escaped record, the visit to Benin by some Italian Capuchins on their way to Warri mentioned in the Oba's letter, can only have been the ill-fated venture of Monteleone in 1695. The letter would also seem to imply that the signatory's father was reigning at the time of that visit: if so, he was probably the ruler who in the preceding years had exchanged messages with Monteleone inviting a mission to Benin. He would also be the Oba whom Nyendaël met and whose rituals were not apparently accompanied by human sacrifice. Benin tradition retains no clear memory of a major civil war at this time, but a large-scale and unexplained rebellion of the chiefs and people against the Oba is firmly associated with the reign of Ewuakpe at the end of the seventeenth century.² On the evidence of the letter again, the Oba of the civil war period must have died at some time between Nyendaël's last visit to Benin in the early months of 1702 and the time that the letter was written in 1710.³ The extraordinary contrast between the reception given to the missionaries in 1709 and 1710 furnishes some reason for fixing the change of ruler within that year, which would accord reasonably well with the traditional dating of Ewuakpe's death.⁴ King-lists agree that Ewuakpe was succeeded by his son Ozuere who may, therefore, have been the Oba that welcomed the Capuchins and gave them land on which to build. Of Ozuere, Egharevba gives the following account:⁵

After the death of Ewuakpe, his second son was made Oba with the title Ozuere. Ozuere usurped the throne in spite of the law which Ewuakpe had made that only the eldest son of the Oba should be the heir and successor. Ozuere's claim was supported by Iyase Ode and there was civil war which lasted many weeks. At last Ozuere was utterly defeated and took refuge at the court of his maternal uncle, Ejima of Okeluhén, and from there went to Uhen where he was eventually killed by a thunderbolt. Ozuere reigned for one year.

Such a brief and troubled reign may provide the explanation for the mission's failure which was reported to the Sacra Congregazione in 1719 when one of the two Capuchins who had gone to Benin returned

¹ A. S. C. *Scritture riferite nei Congressi. Africa* etc. vol. IV. fol. 30. This is perhaps the first recognition that the will of the Oba alone was not able to bring about a change in religion.

² ref. Egharevba. *op. cit.* pp.38-40. Egharevba dates Ewuakpe's accession to "about 1700"; Talbot (*The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*. London, 1926. vol.I. ch.4.) puts it back to 1685. If Ewuakpe was the Oba during whose reign the civil war and the visit of Monteleone took place, he could not have ascended the throne later than 1690.

³ ref. Bradbury's article, p. 274.

⁴ 1712 according to Egharevba: 1715 according to Talbot.

⁵ Egharevba. *op. cit.* p.40.

to Italy. This priest, Father Celestino d'Aspra, said that he and his companion had spent three years in Benin and failed to make any progress because the people "were most obstinate in their errors, and they worship the devil: but there are some who would follow the Holy Faith, were it not that the king will not give them permission and freedom to profess it". This debacle would be more intelligible if the Oba reigning in 1710 had been supplanted by a ruler hostile to him and his policies, among which his pro-Christian measures must have occupied an important place.¹

In assessing the significance of this episode in Benin history, it is worthy of note that the period during which the Capuchin missionaries were living in Benin City corresponds very closely with a hiatus in Dutch trade and an effort to increase Portuguese trade with Benin. A revival in trade with the latter nation towards the end of the seventeenth century had been accompanied by a certain measure of political influence, notably manifested in a Portuguese mediation which put an end to the civil war.² From the Oba's letter to the Pope it is clear that the Italian Capuchins too had endeavoured to play a conciliatory role in Benin politics. Whether the Dutch tried to exert influence on the internal affairs of Benin to favour their own trade cannot be determined for lack of evidence. Obscurity also surrounds the Dutch withdrawal from the Benin trade about 1709, but it may have been related to the destruction of a village near Arebo in a dispute over some trading debts.³ At the same time the Capuchin Prefect in São Tomé was suggesting to the king of Portugal that a ship should visit Benin every year so that it might carry provisions to the missionaries there while collecting a profitable cargo of ivory.⁴ Since most Portuguese trade on the West African coast was by this time conducted from Brazil,⁵ the matter was referred to the Governor of Brazil for discussion with the merchants of Bahia, the centre of the West African trade, on the understanding that the government would be prepared to make fiscal concessions to have such a regular commerce established. Three merchants expressed willingness for the undertaking provided they were given the privileges already enjoyed by the inhabitants of São Tomé and Príncipe, and that the trade included slaves as well as ivory. After Treasury approval had been

¹ I have been unable to trace the text of Father Celestino's report which would probably resolve many doubts in this period of Benin history.

² Nyendaël in Bosman *op. cit.* p.256.

³ Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague. *Nieuwe West-Ind. Comp. Bezittingen ter Kuste van Guinea*. 82. Instructie voor den Commies Revixit van Naersen. Art. 7. 16 May 1715. Arebo, which must not be confused with Arbon, lay on a branch of the Ughoton Creek. In Dutch documents the burned village is called "Mobor". It is possible that these two places were Monteleone's "Oriboo and Mabbor",.

⁴ A. H. U. *Consultas da Baia*. codice 253. fol. 103r-v.

⁵ ref. my article "The Re-Establishment of Portuguese Factories on the Costa da Mina to the mid-Eighteenth Century", in this Journal, vol.I. no.3. 1958.

obtained, the Portuguese Council for Overseas Affairs was able to advise acceptance of the merchants' proposal:

...and although it is thought that there may be some reduction in royal duties, this should be sacrificed in the interest of propagating the Catholic faith in this kingdom of Benin, and also to assist the needs of commerce, and the importation of more slaves into Bahia where they are very necessary for labour on the plantations and the cultivation of those lands...

But this decision was not reached until December 1714, by which time the mission had already withdrawn. Late in 1713 the Dutch had resumed their voyages to Benin, and in 1715 they signed a commercial treaty with an Oba who was almost certainly Akenzua I, brother and vanquisher of Ozuere.

Numerous strands of evidence thus link the Capuchin missionary activity directed from São Tomé with the internal conflicts that devastated Benin in the 1690s and again in the struggle between Ozuere and Akenzua. Whether the interest which the two Obas (Ewuakpe and Ozuere?) displayed in Christianity was merely incidental to the issues involved in these wars, or whether it was essential to an attempt to effect a profound modification in religion and government, cannot be determined until much more information is forthcoming about this crucial period. The influence of the Christian experiment in Warri cannot be discounted. A strong-willed Oba must have desired to escape the political impotence to which rulers of the earlier seventeenth century had been reduced, and more than anything else it was the religious ritual that had been built up around the ruler which insulated him from political power.

With the withdrawal of Father Celestino and his companion in 1713, the Christian missionary effort in Benin ceased and was not revived until after the British occupation. Lessening interest in the area on the part of the Portuguese government helps to account for this total cessation. Much more important was the demoralising effect of repeated failure upon the Capuchin mission to which the Sacra Congregazione had entrusted the conversion of Benin. Many members of that Order who worked and died in Benin were obviously men of the deepest sincerity and devotion, yet their reports must raise doubts whether they possessed the knowledge, vision and tenacity needed to accomplish their task. In particular, not one of them came near an adequate understanding of the complex religious system they were trying to displace. Perhaps Jesuit methods would have been more successful. Twice, in 1515 and 1710, missions came upon crises in the history of Benin, but events did not turn in their favour. Instead their chronicle remains one of few and brief endeavours scattered over two centuries among a people who displayed, at best, faint curiosity in the foreign faith, but more often a deep suspicion or open hostility. Benin tradition as recorded by Egharevba has greatly exaggerated both the scale and the impact of the

missions,¹ but this is probably a recent development of tradition inspired by acquaintance with European documentary sources. While the religious ceremonial of Benin may have been influenced by the details of Roman Catholic ritual,² the religion of the Binis, though clearly subjected to profound changes during this period, pursued its own development and resisted the Christian missions with complete success.

¹ e.g. Egharevba. *op. cit.* p. 28. "The work of the mission made progress and thousands of people were baptised before the death of the great explorer John Affonso d'Aveiro, who was buried with great lamentations by the Oba and the Christians at Benin City".

² ref. Bradbury. *The Edo-Speaking Peoples*. p. 52. for the Ohensa, guardians of the shrine of Osanobua. Egharevba associates the Ohensa, "the native Fathers", with the missions, presumably because they were said to have worn a cross, and because the shrines of Osanobua are believed to stand on the sites of churches built by the Portuguese. Again this is probably an unfortunate reconciliation of tradition with documents. The crosses are more likely to have owed their origin to the Ogane than to the missionaries.

APPENDIX

Sire,

Mestre Miguel of the Order (sc.of Christ), Brother Antonio and Brother Francisco of the Order of St. Francis, the Fathers whom Your Highness sent Benin to inform the conscience of its king and for other matters touching our holy Catholic faith, report that they have been there for a year and more, and make known to Your Highness that they have no confidence, nor any reasons for presuming that the said king will be converted to Christ. On the contrary he has till now persisted more firmly than ever in his human sacrifices, idolatries and diabolical invocations night and day, and in giving twice every day his meed to the enemy of mankind, the devil. Sometimes he has summoned us to witness such things. He anoints himself with human blood and holds to many other superstitions, abominations and errors.

Our reception was not very friendly because he knew that we had not brought him any worldly gifts: the spiritual ones he despised, and has never shown them esteem as he should if he truly appreciated them and the favour Your Highness has conferred on him. We gave him Your Highness' letter with great solemnity, kissing it and staking our lives upon it; he did not receive it as he should have done, but threw it into a little box or chest that stood on his left hand and did not open it until three months later when he summoned us for the purpose. He has lodged us in the houses of heathens where there are many idols and sorcerers, and guards to watch over us. Here everyone is on top of us night and day, so that from all these hindrances, uproar and vexations we are unable to read the divine service. We have been robbed of all our possessions, and very badly treated and abused.

We preached to him about the Faith and his perilous condition, for which he so hates us that he has not seen us for a long time, and if we on that account try to take the initiative, he quickly puts a stop to our efforts. If we go to the palace, he orders the gates to be shut in our faces, and, what is worse, his men, whether on his orders we know not, insult us and sometimes lay hands upon us. Our life is spent in selling everything we brought with us in order to save ourselves from hunger which is ever-present, both because of the poor harvest this year and because we have received little or no charity or aid from anyone save Your Highness, and even that the French stole from us. All our allowance for the past year was sent to us in the trading ships which they robbed. So for these and many other reasons we asked the king to give us leave to depart with a reply to Your Highness' letter. But he refused, saying that we are not to go away until an ambassador arrives from Your Highness with a letter, which means to say that we are his prisoners, as is also apparent from the guards that are set over us and the fact that we are not permitted to go out of the city. By these and other means, and with the hunger we suffer, he is killing us by inches. We do not wish to ask him for anything because he

knows our needs, and whenever we tell him we are being robbed, he tells us openly and in front of everyone that we are lying.

He would not accept the booklets that we offered to him from Your Highness for the boys; instead he forbade their master, Afonso Anes, a Christian he holds prisoner, to teach from them so that they might know nothing about the Faith. He sent word to Gregorio Lourenço, a Christian of this country, that he should not have his children and wives baptised, and asked who had given him permission to do so. He sent for the Cross and the image of Our Lady which was carried to him with great reverence, the Fathers wearing their vestments. He was seated on a raised dais with three steps, and after looking at the statue and crucifix, and feeling them allover with his hands, he ordered them to be placed on the step on which his feet were resting. This was done by Antonio, a Christian he keeps in the island (sc. São Tomé) and who was there at the time. We then went up to him and told him something of the mystery of the Cross. It is said here that he and some of his brothers were christened by the earlier Fathers and that he relapsed into idolatry. He is so tyrannical and so cunning in devilish matters that it is impossible to come to any understanding with him, and he is unreliable in his word and promises. He rejoices in all the evil that befalls the Christians. This being his temperament, he treats us very badly, and did so during our grave illnesses from which we miraculously recovered. Now on the departure of these ships we wished to have leave to go, but he would not listen to us and sent us to his pilots, who abused us greatly in word and deed, so that we returned with much shame to our prison where we stand nearer to death than to life—a death we should glory in were it to the benefit of Christ.

For these reasons, therefore, the said Fathers beseech Your Highness by the wounds of Christ to come to their aid by sending a fleet to this river because of the French who are there, and giving the commander orders to take us from here. Or (let rescue be sent) by way of the island, if that can be done more speedily, for we fear that he will sacrifice us should his fetish tell him to do so. And since we have lost our bodies, let him not put us in peril of losing our souls through human frailty, of which we are sensible, and his habit of ill-treating and imprisoning all ambassadors of kings who send messages to him, as he did to those from Labida and Arida and many others, besides the Christian kings he holds captive. Your Highness can remedy all this for God has made you victorious and triumphant in the affairs of our holy Catholic Faith; and now may He grant increase to your years and royal dominion to His service, amen.

the xxx August 1539,
from Your Highness's intercessors,
Michael Magro, Brother Antonio, Brother Francisco.

RESEARCH NOTES

SOME HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE NTEM

Submitted by

M. D. W. JEFFREYS

THE advent of British administration in these parts gave the Ntem hope of release from their Fulani thralldom. Banyo was the Fulani centre whose control extended to the frontiers of the present Wiya tribe. Ntem was thus under Fulani control. Gashaka, under a Fulani, was a subdistrict of Banyo and controlled this area in which Ntem and other villages lived. The following account, taken from Mr Hunt's *Quarterly Report of March 1920*, throws light on the situation: "When I was at Nso in January, on the eastern boundary, a messenger from Ntem arrived to say that the Gashaka (British) and Banyo (French) District Officers had met a short time previously and put up a boundary stone on the Nsob—Banyo road between Ngwom and Songolong, leaving Ntem, Mberikpa, Ngu, Shi, Iyaji, Ngonkaw in British territory. The Ntem chief said that he had been instructed to pay tax to Bamenda though I doubt this".

The next official notice of these Ntem occurs in the Bamenda Quarterly Report for September, 1922, where it is reported that "messengers from Ntem arrived at Bamenda station on 15.8.1922 again asking to be included in the Bamenda division. They said they had paid no tax since the Anglo-French boundary was fixed on the Banyo road in 1920, but that this year the Fulani chief of Gashaka had sent to demand it. They also said it took them twelve days to reach Gashaka".

In the meanwhile discussions had been taking place over a demarcation of a boundary between the northern and the southern Cameroons to correspond with that between northern and southern Nigeria. The account of how it was done as seen through African eyes will be taken from Wiya tribal history.

The Ntem chief realised that he might now be free of the Banyo Fulani yoke. He knew that the tribes in the Bamenda division were not subject to Fulani overlordship and dreaded the prospect of being placed under the Fulani chief of Gashaka. Consequently when the boundary between northern and southern Cameroons, to equate with the boundary between northern and southern Nigeria, was under review the Ntem were keen to be registered as members of the southern Cameroons and not as members of the northern Cameroons for as members of northern Cameroons they would be subject to the control of the Fulani chief of Gashaka.

The settlement of the boundary between northern and southern Cameroons so far as it affects the Ntem is recorded in Wiya history as follows. "In Mfu's time the boundary between northern and southern Nigeria¹ was made. The principal people concerned were Mr Hawkesworth from Bamenda, a District Officer from Yola whom we do not know;² Mfu, our chief and his *tala sigogot* or council and the Gashaka chief and his elders. The Gashaka chief was a Fulani and Fogamshi was the name of the Ntem chief. The Gashaka chief claimed that Ntem, having been under Fulani control for many years was part of his people.

"When Fogamshi heard that a boundary was to be made, separating the Fulani of northern Nigeria from us, locals, in the south, he came and held Mfu by the ankles,³ imploring his help, saying that he did not want to remain under the Gashaka Fulani nor did he want to be separated from his Wiya brothers—a separation that such a northern and southern boundary was likely to achieve.

"Mfu promised his help. Mfu told Mr Hawkesworth that all these Nsungli settlements under the Fulani chief of Gashaka were really the Wiya brothers and he did not want them to be cut off from him and placed under Yola—the Government administrative centre for that part of northern Nigeria contiguous with the Wiya tribe—but that all should be included in the administrative unit of Bamenda where there were no Fulani.⁴ "At this enquiry which took place in 1923 when this attitude of Ntem and of the other villages was voiced, the Gashaka chief protested, claiming that the Ntem were part of his people and that the Ntem chief had always been a vassal of the Gashaka Fulani. The Gashaka chief said that if it were true that Ntem and the Wiya were brothers and that Ntem wanted to follow Wiya, then Ntem was to pay compensation. Mfu pointed out that in the beginning the following peoples were all one and had walked together, namely Wiya, Rom, Ntem, Mbejo and Ngomko.⁵

¹ This boundary between northern and southern Nigeria had long been made, it was the boundary between northern and southern Cameroons that was under consideration.

² From para. 62 of Mr Carpenter's Kaka-Ntem report this man was Major Glasson.

³ This action is in West Africa a widely recognized form of submission to, and acceptance of, the owner of the ankles as the clasper's overlord.

⁴ The reason for this desire to be separated from the Fulani ruler was to escape the inevitable extortion that went on under such rulers. Under the umbrella of help opened by the Wiya chief, Mfu, many villages other than Nsungli claimed brotherhood with the Wiya chief, as parts of a hitherto unknown Wiya tribe, unknown even to the Wiya chief.

⁵ In this connection attention is invited to information obtained by Mr F. W. H. Migeod and published in his book *Through British Cameroons* (London 1925, p.124). "The Lom chief gave me some past history of Lom, which is also pronounced Rom. The Lom, the Ntem and the Ndum (Wiya) he said all came together from a place named Kimongo in or near the present Tikar. The chief said he recognized the Ndum chief as his head".

"The Gashaka claimed that Ntem, Nguu, Ngom, Ngomko and Kidasharu under Yaji, all our brothers, were under him and that if they left him they were to pay him compensation. Mbem now put forward his blood-brother relationship with us and said he wished to follow the Wiya chief and not the Gashaka and Mfu backed his claim. The Gashaka chief asked for compensation from him also.

"The District Officer from Yola supported the claim for compensation and the two District Officers came to the following arrangement: Ntem and Mbem were each to pay the Gashaka chief one hundred, iron, native-shovels and thereafter could follow the Wiya chief. Kidasharu was to pay sixty and Ngom and Ngomko each, fifty such shovels, and thereafter to follow the Wiya chief. The iron shovels to be paid as compensation were the large dowry shovels of the Mfumte and Mbem people.¹ Whether this compensation was ever paid I do not know but the District Officer Yola asked for it and the District Officer Bamenda agreed to it. The boundary was then made leaving these people in Bamenda to follow the Wiya chief while the Mambilla remained under the Gashaka chief in Northern Cameroons.

"During Mfu's reign the rift between Ntem and Wiya occurred which lasts to the present day. The split arose out of the lies told by the Ntem chief to Mr Carpenter when the Ntem intelligence report was being compiled. The Ntem chief announced that the Wiya people were the descendants of an Ntem *Ya*.²

"Against this nonsensical claim by the Ntem chief the Wiya pointed out that *Ya* was a Bansa word for a Bansa title for a royal woman and that the Wiya did not use this term which they most certainly would if what the Ntem chief had said was true. The Wiya title for a king's mother was *Mainyi* and not *Ya*, a term used by the Ntem.³

The former paramountcy of the Ndu, alias Wiya, chief was vouched for by a disinterested village head. Kiron, an old village head of Milup in the Bansa tribal area giving evidence before me in the demarcation of the Bansa—Ntumbo tribal boundary said; [in an unpublished Government MSS. *Land Record Book III 1944*, I recorded] "In Fon Nsirringbong's time (a Bansa chief) the only free chiefs in this part of the world were those of Bansa, of Wiya and of Mbwo. All the others were vassals of the Bansa".

¹ These shovels were really local iron currency and were made by the Kwaja foundrymen and smiths. The weight of such a shovel was about 2 lbs.

² The term *Ya* for a titled woman is widespread in West Africa. It is found among the Yoruba in the form *I-Ya-Lode*. The Bansa Chief has a *Ya*, his sister, whose duties are the same as those of other women in surrounding tribes who bear the title of *Mafon* or mother of the chief. Such women have special sacrificial and ceremonial duties. They also have a say in the affairs of the tribe and the women of the tribe generally are under their aegis. *Man Yi* is the title used at Rom for the woman who holds this office. H. R. Palmer in *Sudanese Memoirs* (Vol.III. Lagos 1928 p. 145) writes: "Among the Daura of Northern Nigeria, *Iya* is a female title which is also seen in title for queen-Magajiya".

³ With Government policy appearing in the native's eyes as an attempt to restore the old order of things the Ntem claim was an astute move made when Mr Carpenter was compiling the Intelligence report. Through such

Mfu then told the Ntem chief that he had been telling lies to Mr Hawkesworth, to Mr Cattle, to Mr Carpenter and to Mr Hook and reminded the Ntem chief of the actual lies he had told. Thus the Ntem chief told these District Officers that the Bamum chief was a brother of the Bansa chief¹ and to Mr Cattle he said that the Ntem belonged to the Mbem group and to Mr Carpenter that he belonged to the Mbo group. When the Ntem chief told Mr Hook that he was the senior of our group Mr Hook told him, to his face, that he was a liar and that we, the Wiya were the senior group and that Ntem was to pay tax through the Wiya to Bamenda and not Wiya to pay tax through Ntem, and that if Ntem did not wish to pay tax this way he was to depart from us. That finished us with Ntem. Mfu told the Ntem chief to run his own people and he, Mfu, would look after the Wiya.”.

Here ends the Wiya narrative and the history of the Ntem can now be pieced together from official records.

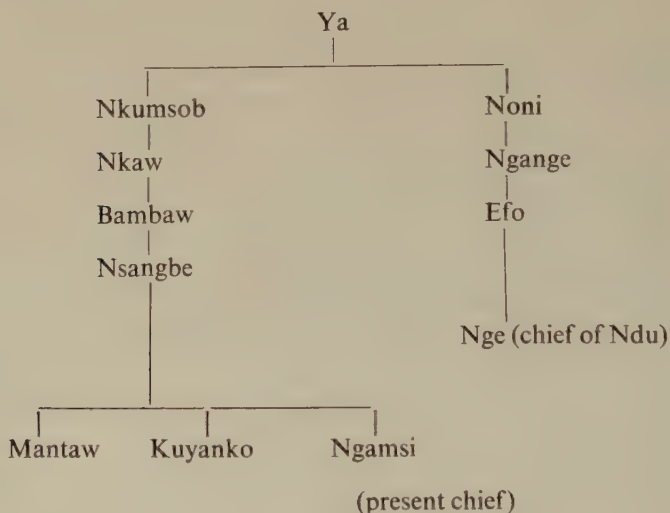
In the March Quarterly Report 1924 is the following survey of the position. “The Kaka and Ntem areas were taken over from Yola as from 1st January 1924... both areas have been included within the jurisdiction of the Nsungli Native Court... For the first time the tax was paid through the family heads... The Native Court was opened at Tangtala by Mr Williams on 25.2.1924. All the village and hamlet heads were present and a number of cases were tried in a thoroughly satisfactory manner. The northern villages showed some reluctance to submit their disputes to the court: that they are much more primitive than their southern brothers and their suspicion of the court is natural and will disappear in time. It is only three years ago that the southern villages, latterly persistent litigants, refused point blank to attend the Bansa Native Court. This point blank refusal was a normal reaction. The Bansa spoke a different language and any people will accept misgovernment by their own people in preference to being well governed by foreigners.

Mr J. C. Drummond-Hay visited this area on 5.9.1924 and submitted a report on the Ntem. He gives a list of villages belonging to the *Ya* family and among them is that of Ntem. Mr Drummond-Hay’s report runs: “*Ntem*. Chief Ngamsi claims that he is of the *Ya* family. He states that *Ya* (or *Ga*) was king of Kimi and his two sons Nkumsob and Noni left Kimi together. Noni settled at Ndu, whilst Nkumsob was killed at Mbua by the Fulanis, his son Nkaw succeeded him but died at Muba (now Ngu). Nkumsob’s grandson, Bambaw finally settled at Ntem and became the first chief of Ntem.

a claim, by showing that the Wiya were merely the distaff side of the migration, the Ntem chief aimed not only at securing independence of the Wiya chief but also to turn the tables by making him, at present an insignificant and ragged chief, the premier chief and the present influential Wiya chief, a subordinate one.

¹ This statement is correct, for Njoya, the Bamum chief, in his *History of the Bamum* refers to the Bansa chief as his brother.

Ngamsi claimed that Nkumsob was the elder of the two sons of *Ya* and therefore Ntem was the senior branch of the family, but he says that Ndu have always been the stronger people and had made Ntem pay tribute.



Ngwanya succeeded Montaw but was deposed by the German administration and Kuyanko then succeeded him”.

Such then was the Ntem history in 1924 as given by the old Ntem chief Ngamsi. There is no Wiya (Ndu) chief by the name of Nge.

It will be interesting to see how eleven years later Ntem history blossomed out under the imagination of Ngamsi’s successor.

In the March Quarterly Report for 1925 one finds: “The chief of Ndu accompanied the District Officer and Mr Bryan, District Officer from Ibi Northern Nigeria, to Lom (Rom) and Mbem... and personally assisted and completed the collection of tax from these two quarters. Later, on his own initiative, he made a tour of his quarters in the Ntem area and seems to have been well received... The Ntem tax was collected without difficulty and the credit for this is due largely to the chief of Ndu”.

This pleasant state of affairs continued because in the June Quarterly Report of this same year one reads: “The Ntem area is now fully controlled by the Nsungli Native Authority and has much improved since the death of the old chief of Ntem. His successor is young and energetic, co-operative with Ndu and attends this court regularly”.

However the rôle of being a subchief to the Wiya chief did not appeal to the Ntem village head and one finds him trying to throw off

allegiance to the Wiya chief. Thus, in the March Quarterly Report of 1926 one finds: "The Ntem chief now claims that he is really senior to Ndu and only admitted his juniority in order to escape from Gashaka. He admits, however, that Ndu broke away with the vast majority of the Ya people and left him with only a small following. It is certain, however, that Ndu can administer the Ya village groups and Ntem cannot, so the latter must abide the results of his own duplicity".

Here it will be of advantage to give such details of Ntem history as are recorded in the Wiya tribal history. The name of the man who lead the Wiya migration from Bakimi was Nyiakunji. They first stopped at Mbia hill, from there they went to Ne where the Mbirip-bwo group stayed. The others went on to Konshep. Nyiankuji is buried at Konshep. Then came Tawiji who is also buried at Konshep. Then came Mfokotu. Under him "the migration moved on but split up into the independent lineages of Konshep, Ntem, Rom, Ngomko, Mbejo and Lu.¹ Mfokotu finally settled at Mba Ndu... The Ntem people who had accompanied us from Bakimi left us at Mba Ndu. We do not know the name of this Ntem chief. Whoever he was, when we reached Mba Ndu he said to Mfokotu: 'When I left Ndipnee I brought oil palm nuts with me and I want to find a place where they will grow. Here at Mba Ndu (nearly 7,000') it is too cold'. So Mfokotu let the Ntem chief take his followers to a warmer place. That is why they are settled at Mbaw...²

"The Wiya chief remarked that they, the Wiya, and the Ntem were of blood, and that the Ntem chief knew that if he saw a fowl on Wiya land he could help himself to it and eat it as though it were his own, and that he was entitled to anything he wanted on Wiya land and that he, the Wiya chief, had reciprocal rights on Ntem land...".

Mforambo, then the tenth Wiya chief, raided Mbinshua and took some three hundred persons captive. Wiya history now records the appearance of the Ntem chief. "When Tonebit, the Ntem chief, heard of Mforambo's success he turned up at Ndipsi, at that time the residence of the Wiya chief, on Ndu day with his warriors and remarked that on Ngang morning, that is the next morning, he wished to attack the Mbinshua people. Mforambo replied that Ngang day was Ngwarong's day³ and that he did not wish to send his warriors out on that day but to keep it as a day of feasting and rejoicing. The Ntem chief said: 'You, Mforambo, attacked with foot soldiers. You had no horses. I have three horses which I bought from the Banyo people. I want to attack'. Mforambo told Tonebit to do as he pleased. So Tonebit attacked Mbinshua but disaster befell him and his attackers.

¹ Lu is not of Wiya stock. It is an autochthonous group in occupation when the Wiya arrived.

² Mbaw means lowlands, plains. The Ntem settled in the hot lowlands below the escarpment where oil palms grow well.

³ Ngwarong is the name of a secret society of maskers under the control of the chief. It acts as his body guard, executive and police.

He was slain and his men routed. At about sunset that day news of the disaster reached Mforambo who remarked: 'Well, the Ntem chief would not listen to me and now he has lost his life and spoilt my name'. Mforambo then took an oliphant and blew on it, thus sounding the war call. When his men assembled he told them that the next day they must find out where the body of the Ntem chief was. By mid-day the Wiya army was ready and moved off to surprise Mbinshua at dawn. The town was encircled in the dark and in the ensuing attack the place was burnt to the ground and most of the Mbinshua killed.... The remnants of the Ntem who were still hiding in the bush were collected and brought to Ndipsi. There they wept before Mforambo over the loss of their chief.

This raid by the Ntem chief is well authenticated. Thus Mkambe village came to the assistance of Mbinshua and Mr Woodhouse records in 1943 the following statement. "Ngi Ngu, the fifth chief of Nkambe village back from Tunbi, the present village head, helped to repel the attack by the Ntem chief. His son, Frinankwe, captured the Ntem chief's helmet in the battle at Binshua. Frinankwe put the helmet on his head. For a young lad to don a chief's helmet is a bad thing. As a consequence the lad fell ill, so the Mbot chief was asked to come and remove this illness from the young man. The Mbot chief did so and the helmet was given to him as payment. This helmet is still with the chief at Mbi Kup....

"Ngwan, Village Head of Binshua, states my father, Ngi, fought off the Ntem attack on us at Binshua hill and killed the Ntem chief. Here is the Ntem chief's spear....

"Njimgon of Mbot stated that in the reign of Njap the Mbot fought off the Wiya and the Fulani. The Ntem chief was killed at Binshua and his helmet is with the Mbot chief to-day".

The Wiya narrative continues as follows: "Mforambo then settled these Ntem men on land belonging to the Bawa quarter of Wiya whose present head (1940) is Nyaso. He also set aside certain raphia groves where these Ntem could get their palm wine.

"A year later Mforambo with the *tala sigogot*, or tribal council, of Ntem selected Mfosobnji to be the new Ntem chief". In the Ntem version of this disaster as given to me, the new Ntem chief was called Fominto and he was made chief on the field of battle so that he could continue the war which then lasted three months before he and his followers returned to Ntem.

The Wiya narrative continues: "Whereupon these Ntem settlers departed with their new chief to their old land. Since that time our chief has always assisted in choosing and crowning the Ntem chief, and we have always walked together until the rupture occurred when Mr Carpenter was compiling the *Ntem Intelligence Report*. The Ntem chief told lies to Mr Carpenter".

In the histories compiled by the Ntem chief no mention is made of this disaster. In the history narrated to me twenty three names of chiefs are listed. The ninth is called Nonebit and not Tonebit. He is

too far back in time to be the Ntem chief slain on Binshua hill and he is succeeded by Fokonki. The name Mfosobnji is not known to the Ntem as a name of a chief of theirs. The name of the Ntem chief claimed by the Ntem to have been killed on Binshua hill is Mfosangwi and he was succeeded by Fominto.

In the Wiya tribal history occurs the following remark: "When the Fulani raids started, the Ntem chief became the vassal of the Banyo Fulani chief and broke off friendship with us. Later on he returned to us and made friends again saying he had been forced to live in caves in the hill sides". The Ntem chief found it galling to be second fiddle to the Wiya chief and realising that tribal histories in Government Intelligence Reports were of considerable importance he decided on an attempt to enhance his status as accepted when the provincial boundary was made between Northern and Southern Cameroons. With this end in view he despatched to the District Officer his own account of Ntem tribal history.

The aim of this alleged tribal history was to establish the Ntem village head's claim to suzerainty over surrounding peoples, including the Wiya tribe. It therefore became necessary to investigate these claims and the following information is taken from his history and from the notes I made of interviews with him in 1941. As tribal ancestors he mentions Bornu, Mbum and Tikar. These names are names of peoples and Tikar is a Fulani nickname that means "death-stubborn".

The Ntem village head's version is written in English by a local school boy as dictated to him by the Ntem village head and runs as follows:-

"The History of Ntem. 17th July, 1935.

Bonu¹ was the originator. Leaving Bonu they came to Mbum. Mbum begat Kimmi Manga and named him Tikar which means 'go out'.² When Kimmi Manga went out became the originated place. He begat (1) Bartiko, (2) Jino, (3) Bansa, (4) (sic) (5) Nditang, Bamum (sic) (6) Mbonya (7) Mbuandu. Jino his second born came and dwelt at a place called Mobua, being the originator of Ntem. He put boundary with Banyo, Bansa and Bamum with Okari, when he was ended all this he died. So the area was called Ntem area till date.

¹ Bonu is a variant for Bornu. M.D.W.J.

² However the Wiya give a different origin for the name Tikar. They claim that it is a Fulani nickname for them based on the corruption of the Wiya word, *ndinka*, meaning "that is so". H. Barth in his book *Travels in Central Africa*. Vol.II. London 1857 p.513, likewise suggests that Tikar is a Fulbe name. He writes:- "Around Adamawa, partly within and partly beyond its boundaries but in a certain degree of subjection are the following tribes:- The Tikar (by this name at least they are called by the Fulbe, though they have probably another name for themselves, as by this they do not seem to be known near the coast)...".

Nyinkup, his prince, succeeded him. When he died, Mfomanyi succeeded him. He died and Mfowup was throned. He died and Mfobonjo succeeded him. From there all the Tikaris began to follow him because they were his race. After which he died and Sambeli succeeded him. Then Mambila began to appear. He died and Mfosuo was enthroned. He died and Kuntu succeeded him. He delivered a princess named Yah. She was the one who bore Ndu. When Ndu was born, Nsungli began to appear. Then the Ntem chief died and Nonebe succeeded him. He died and Mfokonki was enthroned. He died and Mfonansi succeeded him. He died and Mfogansi succeeded him.

"Then one woman came from Kimimanga named Fuom. She bore a son called Fuom-Kimi. Fuom-Kimi came and built beside Ntem, so he was called Small Kimi. He got one quarter head named Gangu. Gangu bore a son named Ngua. Ngua bore Mbem. Mfogansi, the Ntem chief, died and Mfokabo succeeded him. He died and Mfowanko was enthroned.

"He bore Mfokunso and Mfobambu. He promised his first son, Mfokunso, the throne. He refused, saying that his younger brother, Mfobambu, would bewitch him because he was having more witch than himself. Further, he told his father that I receive you, and your son wish to kill me. So the father told him not to be afraid and that he was going to give them a native calabash or bowl and both of them will drink in it and no anything would harm him. When he had given it to them he died and Mfokinso was enthroned according to what the father had said. The younger son at once started to trouble and was driven by the chief. He went to Banyo at a place called Kwancha and met Amagapdo, the Banyo chief. He begged the chief for soldiers to go to war Ntem. The chief refused saying that the Ntem chief was his friend. He told that the chief must not be afraid because he will be on front. So the chief agreed the plan. Then Mfobambu returned to Ntem and the war broke out. They warred eight years going to nine years and the Ntem chief was beheaded. The captives were numberless. From there the Ntem people scattered to Tikar, Kaka, Mambila and to Nsungli. These races began killing them using them, as food.

"Mfobambu was throned. He was greatly annoyed with these races because they killed and ate their brothers. For this reason he started warring against them. He died and Mfosangwi succeeded him. He continued the warring and died at Mbuot. Mfomonto was enthroned. He did likewise and went to Mbuot again seeking to kill their chief but in vain. He returned to Ntem and Banyo chief was dead. Osumanu, his prince, was enthroned. He sent a messenger to war Ntem again, named Gagambah. He warred 4 months going to 5 months, and 2,200 people were captured. They again sent another messenger named Kasalayite. The very same day I, the present Ntem chief, was born. He captured 704 people and carried them to Banyo. Their chief died and Omaro succeeded him. He sent his brother

Yelima Yisa to Ntem. He warred only one day and 150 people were captured. He burned the country. German Government appeared but we did not know. Adamu, another messenger was sent again to Ntem. He captured 48 people on the farm but did not burn the country. This is the trouble that Ntem got in those days. I am writing this history to D. O. (District Officer) because I was told by my old fathers who died long ago. When these village heads now-a-days think of the former trouble, they begin talking against Ntem. This is why the D.O. never got the intelligence. I submissively beg D.O. to ask these following chiefs Banso, Kimi-Manga, Fumban, and Banyo chief and they will inform D.O. who was the right chief in this area. All the tribes that followed Ntem began changing of languages but one point passed them. The one point is like this:- "I am going to sleep". Whenever they wish to say that in their own language they will only call the name of the Ntem chief Jino which shows that they were all the races of Ntem. I am writing all these things to D.O. not that I wish to take anything from any man, but only that I should be as their headman.

"Please Sir, can a Prince be under an ordinary man? Can a man who was a Prince before return again and be as a ordinary man? Jino the originated chief of Ntem will be ashamed, and be crying because he was the owner.

"I beg to hear now from the D.O. whether D.O. will follow new road or the old road of our fathers. I humbly beg to hear now from D.O. because all things are known to D.O. This is why I am glad to write and show the D.O. the history.

I am yours NWANKO,
THE CHIEF OF NTEM".

This Ntem village head then sent in the following additional note on 9.12.1935.

"The ground of Ntem spoiled until late because when Mfowanke was on the throne he begat princes and promised to his elder son, Mfokunso that when he dies he should succeed him. Mfokunso refused saying that Mfobambu his younger brother will bewitch him, that he was having more witchcraft than himself. The father never agreed. When he was indeed dead, Mfokunso was throned. Mfobambu at once began struggling and was driven by the chief. He went and invited the Fulanis to come and war Ntem, who came and beheaded the Ntem chief and Mfobambu was throned. Mfobambu begat Mfosangwi and the witch passed from him to his son. When he died Mfosangwi succeeded him. He begat also his first born and called him Mfomonto. He went to war at Mbuot and the witch killed him there. Mfomonto succeeded him. He begat Ndinko and after which he went and died at Banyo due to the witch and Ndinko was throned. The witch yet reigning in Ntem, Balawa went and invited

Fulas who came and dismissed Ndinko from the throne and Balawa was made chief. He took all the tax money and ate. The Ntems went too and called the Fulas who, hearing this, fled away. Balya was the Fula's messenger. Nkuyanku was then throned. He took a goat and joined all the Ntems together telling them that the goat stood for the names of the six chiefs who were before him. When he said this he killed the goat and died also. The big men took Mfogansu and throned him. He was the one who gave his cap to Ndu due to the fact that he was very old."

Some years later this Ntem Village head sent in the following additional information.

"When Mfogansu died, I, Nwanko, succeeded him and all the Ntem people begged me forgiveness, so I forgave them for their bad doings. So from that time all of them ceased from doing wrong to anyone. I also took a fowl and went to my father's grave and such bad witch stopped in Ntem till date".

The Ntem villagers and the Sambaji¹ came to me for the matter because they had given the Ntem cap to Ndu which Kunyanku already finished. They started dying and some were escaping because they had touched the settled matter.

"The fowl that they brought I gave to the Fombo and Njanko and they went and slaughtered it on my father's grave. I gave another fowl to *Sambaji* and the Ntem villagers and *Sambaji* said Njingwanya killed it. I gave this fowl because my father, Nforgansi (sic), did wrong by giving his cap to Ndu. When it was slaughtered, we took it with guinea corn and threw on the road and all bad things were ceased.

"Please Sir, these histories are few. I have given one to the D.O. Bamenda. I am writing the history in order to make D.O. clear because whatever I told the translator, Moni, he never translated it well. The court was formerly at Banso. Another A.D.O. came to look for families in order to build the court. He brought Ndu chief to Ntem. During that time the chief of Ntem was very old. So Ndu chief asked him for allowance saying that 'When the court shall be built, the money that the Government shall give, I will bring it before you because you are my father'. So the Ntem chief gave him the permission which means that the chief of Ntem was lacked of feet being an old man. This is why the Court was built at Nsungli.

"When we left Kimi the chief tell us that there is a big river before and no one must cross it 2 times. He who will do, his own country will not stand. The country will be very hot. This is the reason why Ntem crossed 2 times and his country began to be hot till date. Sir, if

¹ The Tikar word the kingmakers, *Sambaji*, appeared. When I pointed out that other Tikar groups had it, the Ntem Chief, who had not mentioned this word until then seized upon it with avidity. He described his *Sambaji* as consisting of twelve men until he recollected that *Sambaji* means seven and that the "Privy Council" of the other Tikar groups consisted of seven men.

the above chief agree that I was the right chief, in this area, then I will hear only for D.O. But if they refuse, I will stop all my request.

Yours Ntem Chief".

I was able at a later date to get a fuller version of their history from the Ntem village head in the presence of the Rom village head and of the Ngwante (Waganshi) village head. These with their followers then met me at the Ntem Rest House.

The Ntem village head's name was Fowanko, a man far advanced in years. He had been born "in an emergency", that is during a Fulani raid. His attempts to aggrandize himself by exaggerated statements were curbed by checking them with the statements of the other two village heads. His version of his importance was not borne out by facts. Thus it appeared, for instance, that in the recent road clearance programme he had been unable to get his section done, though the village head of Ngwanti, a stranger in these parts, had had no difficulty in getting his section of the road cleared.

The facts of the ensuing history were, of course, checked with the other village heads, but I found the Ntem village head unreliable when unchecked. For instance, owing to false information supplied by him the occurrence of tin ore was reported six miles from his place. There was no such ore there. The specimens sent in by him had come from Mayo Daga in French territory.

He claimed that the heads of the Ntem, the Rom and the Wiya were originally full brothers and that Ntem was, and is still, the senior. On being questioned as to the relationships implied by "full brothers", he stated that all he could say was that all three groups came from Bakimbi¹ and that Ntem was the first to leave. He stated that these three groups are all Tikari and that they originally came from Bornu. From Bornu they arrived at and stayed in a land called Mbum² and that Ngaundere is to-day that area. From Mbum they went to Kimbi whence they were driven by Fulani raids³. From Kimbi they went to Bamum territory and from there to Batiko, then to Nde, then to Pa and then, crossing the Mairim river, they settled at Mbua.

¹ Bakimbi, the modern town of Bamkin in French Cameroons not far from Banyo, is also known as Kimbi, Kimmi and Kimmi Manga in the narrative. *Manga* is the Fulani word for 'great', and the appearance of this title presumably marks the taking over of Bakimi as either a Fulani controlled settlement or as an ancient Fulani slave settlement. Kimmi Ngu is the Ntem name.

² The present three large Tikar chieftaincies, Ditam, Ngambe and Bamkin are Mbum offshoots. The senior was Ditam.

³ Both Wiya and Bansa histories indicate that a dynastic struggle was the reason for leaving. Both the Ntem village head and Chilla, the Office Messenger from Bansa, think that Rifum was the name of the Kimmi chief when these migrations started.

Mbua is now abandoned and has reverted to bush, but the old corn grinding stones are still there. Mbua is distant about a day's march from the Ntem Rest House. The place called Nguu is on the site of Mbua. Further Fulani raids caused the Ntem people to leave Mbua and settled at Mbagu which is now a forest clad area on the foothills from the present Ntem. Ntem is the European name for Mundo.¹ There was an intermediate settlement between Mbagu and the present Mundo, called Nkulep or Lep. Owing to a number of village heads dying there in quick succession, Lep was abandoned and Mundo founded about eight years ago. Lep is nearby and is on the way to Mbum via Ngwanti.

Questioned about the name Bakimi, the village head of Ntem said that Kimi Manga was not the name of a person, but of a place, and that the present head of Great Kimmi is Mbausana. He said he did not know the name of the founder of Kimmi Manga but Kimmi² Pete or Little Kimmi was founded by a woman whose name was Fon Kimmi.

"Out of Kimmi Manga came seven peoples:

Batiko	Bamum
Nso	Mbuana
Nditam	Mbwando
Ntem	

Batiko is in French territory, near Mbamkin. The man, Batiko, by different wives, founded the following people: Mbuana, Mbwando, Nditam and Batiko itself. Nditam, Mbuana and Mbwando are also in French territory but beyond the river Ribe from here.

"The story of the origin of the Mbem who are our neighbours is as follows. The Mbem people were in a village called Ganya in Bakimmi. There was a great flood and everyone was drowned except two men, Nkunjanka and Ngwan. They first settled on Ntem land. Nkunjanka stayed and founded the settlement of Njanka while Ngwan moved off and founded Mbem.

"We are called Ntem, a name we had in Kimmi. We are called after a man and not after a woman.

"The Ntem leader who brought us from Kimmi is known and also the names of all our village heads since then. Their names are:

1. Jino	9. Nonebit	17. Fosangwe
2. Njungu	10. Fokonki	18. Fawminto
3. Fomani	11. Fonenshi	19. Ndiinko
4. Fawo	12. Fawgamshi	20. Barewa

¹ Later on he gave me quite a different name.

² Pete is the Fulani word for 'small'.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 5. Mfawbungaw | 13. Mfawkabu | 21. Nkwinyanku |
| 6. Sambele | 14. Fowanko | 22. Fawgamshi |
| 7. Fonsho | 15. Fokwinsho | 23. Fowanko (the |
| 8. Kuntu | 16. Fobambu | present village head) |

The first fourteen leaders are all buried at Mabua, but the site of their graves is not known. Nothing but their names is known about the first two chiefs.

3. Fomani's son Mfokum, founded the village of Nya Onka.
4. Fawo's son, Senko, founded the settlement of Njinku.
5. Mfawbungaw's son, Kwasa, founded the village of Ndikumbinishi. In Mfawbungaw's time a second migration of Tikar people left Kimmi and found the present of villages of Nguu, Ngonkaw, Ngwat and Mbirikwa.¹
6. Sambele's son, Tingwo, founded Ndinkonku. In Sambele's time the Mambilla people arrived. They came from Mbum and went to Samba but did not pass through Kimmi.²
7. Fonsho's son, Fonka, founded Munki.
8. Kuntu had two children: one was a son, Nonebit, who succeeded him, and the other was a daughter. She had a son and her father, Kuntu, gave him the same name as that of his own son; namely Nonebit. Kuntu then left Mubua and settled at Komdu (old Ndu) where he stayed for three years. Why he went there or why he left Mubua we do not know. After three years the elders who had remained at Mubua went to Komdu and persuaded Kuntu to return to Mubua. He did so, but left Nonebit, the son of his daughter, Ya, at Komdu and this Nonebit founded from Kondu the present Wiya people who are therefore called Wiya or the people of the Ya after his mother who was the first Ya".

It is necessary to interrupt the narrative here to discuss this claim for the origin of the Wiya people. The Wiya point out that Ya is a Bansa word, a title given to a chief's eldest sister as the senior or head woman in the tribe. The corresponding title among the Wiya is Monkom. The Wiya deny, on this ground, that they are descended from a Ya. The explanation offered by the Ntem village head appears to be a rationalization to account for the Wiya people as being a subordinate branch of the Ntem, a rationalization based on the similarity in sound and on nothing else. Neither the Ntem, nor the Wiya, nor the Rom account of the origin of the Wiya group confirms Mr Hawkesworth's statement that there was an original Ya tribe which came to be ruled by a usurping family, that of the present Ndu Chief.

¹ This account is corroborated.

² The little information that I have obtained from the Mambilla themselves suggests that they are an autochthonous group.

The Rom account does not confirm the origin of the Wiya from a Ya. The Rom village head stated that the Rom were closely connected with the Wiya though how the relationship arose was unknown to him. He stated that his father, Tonga, had said that his ancestor came from Wiya.

It is curious that the Ntem and the Wiya each record a chief by the name of Nonebit. It is doubtful if chronology permits the Wiya chief to have been the grandson of the Ntem Nonebit.

Returning to Ntem history, the Village head continued with the reign of Kuntu saying that Kuntu's son, Sangut, founded Montinsi.

9. Nonebit's son, Bansi, founded the village of Siansi. His namesake, his sisters's son, founded the settlement of the Wiya people. This Nonebit was the first son of a woman given the title of Ya.
10. Fokonki's son, Karango, founded the village of Mongusi.
11. Fonenshi, nothing is known about him.
12. Fogamshi, nothing is known about him.
13. Mfawkabu, nothing is known about him.
14. Fowanko, nothing is known about him.
15. Fokwinsho was beheaded at Kansinku by the Fulani. When Fowanko died there was a quarrel between two of his sons about the succession. Fokwinsho became chief and his brother, Bambu, called on the Fulani to help him destroy Fokwinsho. A civil war between these two brothers started. It lasted for nine years till Fokwinsho was captured and beheaded by the Fulani and Bambu succeeded him. (It is clear from the narrative that the Fulani were now penetrating this area.)
16. Fobambu's son, Mfosama, founded the village of Ndikwanshi. Fobambu died at Mbagu which he had founded because it had caves where people could hide from the Fulani raids.

Here it may be pointed out that the fact that Fobambu found it necessary to live in caves to escape the Fulani is evidence that Ntem never wielded much power or authority. They continued to inhabit these caves until the Germans broke the power of the Fulani. The Ntem, under the Germans, were subject to the Emir of Banyo, according to Carpenter's Kaka—Ntem Intelligence Report para.55. Under the British the Ntem were ruled by the Fulani Lamido at Gashaka prior to being handed over to Bamenda.

I have visited Mbagu which is situated in a bit of forest well up a granite hill-side. The ruins of the old settlement are plainly visible. The caves are really the interstices between large granite boulders that have slid down into a mountainside water course. The caves are cold and there is no water in them. I was informed that on the approach of the Bara the Ntem Chief would take to his hut and be invisible, even to his people, for as long as three months. His hut was near a cave entrance. Water had to be obtained at night by parties making sorties to get it. The Bara used to try and smoke the people out of the caves and at times they succeeded in forcing a few

out. Mbagu has a stone wall about 5 ft. high with a narrow entrance facing the Ntem plain. My guides explained that a constant guard was kept there and that when a raid was on people hardly slept at all. In one raid they were completely surprised, because the Bara attacked at dawn not from the plains, but from the mountains and went into the town before the alarm could be raised—my guides said that there were always traitors who would give the Bara information about the town and lead them there by secret ways.¹

17. Mfosangwi started to fight with all the people around him.

In his attack on Mbwoth he took his army to old Ndu, who are our brothers, and slept there. The next morning he attacked the Mbwoth people from there but was killed in the fighting.²

18. Fominto was chosen as chief on the war field in place of his dead father. He continued the war for three months and then returned to Ntem.³

The big Fulani raids started now. Osmanu was the Banyo Chief at the time. He sent Kanga Mba and 2,200 of us Ntems were captured and taken away. Later a second Bara raid under Kasalyite⁴ and his people.

"Both these leaders in the employ of the Baras were pagans like ourselves. Harbe is the name the Bara use for us pagans. Fominto was captured and taken to Banyo where he was killed. He had in his life time assisted in the coronation of the Wiya Chief, Mfu. In the Kasalyite raid we lost 704 people captured: some however escaped and came back to us. My mother was pregnant at the time: she fled into the bush where I was born. My father did not at once become chief. The chieftainship passed from brother to brother and in this way in time my father, Nkwinyanku, became chief. When he died, as there were no brothers to succeed him, I, his son, did so.⁵ When Usumanu, the Banyo Chief died, he was succeeded by Omaro who sent his henchman Yeleini Sisa to attack us. He got only 15 of us and then went back to Njale in Mbembe and there he raided Ndu. He returned to Banyo via Ntem but left us alone. In the last Fulani raid, when we lost about 48 people, we fought with spears, bows and arrows, guns and shields.

¹ In one Fulani raid on the Ntem people a daughter of the Ntem Chief was captured with her baby girl and taken to Banyo. Her grand-daughter became the Fulani wife of Office Messenger Hamman, a Fulbe Wuro.

² It is stated in Carpenter's report that these raids were undertaken at the instigation, and with the assistance, of the Fulani.

³ This account is confirmed in the Wiya tribal history.

⁴ Njoya in his *History of the Bamum* Cap. 172 mentions this man and refers to him as being a war leader in Banyo in the early part of Njoya's reign. Njoya states that Mengwa, a war leader, was poisoned by his wife, whereupon Mengwa's son, Sanda, took his place and assumed the title of Gasait (Kasalyite). So these raids would be towards the end of the nineteenth century.

⁵ In the Ntem classificatory system both Fogamshi and Nkwinyanku, if brothers, would be referred to as "father" by Fowanko. A genealogical table would clear up matters.

We had in those days a big market at Wajiri wherein we traded for goods. Guns came to this market from two sources. The Nso traders brought them and so did the Fulani. The Fulani guns were the best. Then in the time of the Germans, there occurred the last of the Fulani raids. Its leader was one Adamu and he captured only 8 people. After that there were no more raids because the Germans fought the Banyo Chief. We used to hide in a cave at Mbagu when the Bara raids were on.

19. Ndiinko was the next chief. He was ordered by the Germans to come down from Mbagu and build his town on the level. This town was called Nkure and also Lep. Here he died and was buried.
20. Barewa followed but was a bad chief. He sold to the German native soldiers the daughters of all the various chiefs. We disapproved of this action and so deposed him. He went sick and died at Kumbo hospital where he is buried.
21. Nkwinyanku followed and is buried at Lep.
22. Fogamshi followed and is buried at Lep—we had lost a number of chiefs at Lep in a few years, also many of our people died there.
23. Fowanko on this account left Lep and founded Ngobue, our present settlement, which the Europeans call Ntem.

No Ntem may in his life-time cross the Mairin river twice. He would die shortly afterwards if he did so”.

Carpenter in the Kaka-Ntem Intelligence Report suggests that the Fulani raids put Ntem at the head of the villages of the plain and he points out that the Germans “pursued the policy of making the Ntem chief responsible for the neighbouring villages”. He records, however, the “bitter feeling” of the “villages of the Mbaw plain for the Ntem Community”. This feeling is understandable. Far from being the head of the villages, the Ntem chief was a fugitive in caves from the Fulani and then was made, by the Germans, a taxpayer to the Fulani Emir of Banyo and by the British, a taxpayer to the Emir of Gashaka. There is nothing in the history of Ntem as stated by themselves to show that they were ever a great power or people. Carpenter says: “Like Bali, the people of Ntem live in the glory of their past, and it must indeed be galling to see a junior member of their family in the position of the Ndu Chief: even the Nso Chief was possibly not so powerful as Ntem”. But the Ntem claim to seniority must be queried in the light of their own history while it should be noted that neither the Bansa nor the Ndu chief was ever enslaved by the Fulani: each remained ruler over his own people.

THE DYNASTIC CHRONOLOGY OF FULANI ZARIA

Submitted by

H. F. C. SMITH

THE following reflections on the present state of our knowledge in the question of the Fulani king-list of Zaria have been provoked by the appearance of Dr M. G. Smith's important study of political developments in that Emirate since 1800.¹ It is possible, I think, that Dr Smith regards his study of the political history of Zaria as chiefly important because to him it furnishes proof of the validity of analysing historical phenomena by the application of some Hegelian type system of ideas. To the historian, however, its importance does not lie here. It lies rather in the methods used by the author for reconstructing the sequence of political events, and the validity of this reconstruction.

Dr Smith has produced a detailed 60-page political history of Zaria from 1804 to 1903, containing a great deal of most interesting material which is probably not recorded in any other written document anywhere. In the present state of our organised knowledge of the history of Zaria this is an outstanding achievement, and must certainly engage the serious attention of all students of Nigerian history.

Remarkably enough, however, the only indication which Dr Smith gives in his book of how he was able to encompass all this, is one general reference to discussions he had with a grandson of Mallam Musa and "several other elders of high rank". It is clear, at the same time, that he did not use written documents (with one exception noted below), and his work must be regarded as an excellent example of the use of oral tradition in historical reconstruction. Herein lies its great interest to the historian of Nigeria. In an explanatory article which he has since published² Dr Smith does go on to say that he in fact achieved his reconstruction by collating in detail a number of orally preserved accounts of the history of the various offices and lineages involved in Zaria politics. He was able cleverly to cross-check these accounts to the point where he became convinced that his reconstruction actually represented the main political developments in each of the thirteen reigns of the period. His method is, indeed, an extremely fruitful one, as it is well known that the history of office-

¹ *Government in Zazzau* (Oxford, 1960).

² *Field Histories among the Hausa* (Journal of African History, II, 1, Cambridge, 1961, pp. 87-101).

holding families can easily be preserved with great accuracy over a span of three generations. At the present time there is a very general need for having such history recorded on a large scale. It is therefore very possible that the factual material recovered by Dr Smith relating to the distribution of offices and fiefs and so on by particular Emirs is accurate. As the details of his system of checking as applied to particular instances are, however, known only to himself, Dr Smith must for the present remain the only person in a position to be proper judge of this.

Nevertheless, there is one matter in which we can attempt an absolute evaluation of this reconstruction, namely: the question of dynastic chronology. For in the problem of dating the reigns of the twelve Emirs involved, the source of Dr Smith's information is open for all to see. It is none other than E. J. Arnett's *Gazetteer of Zaria Province*¹. Now the chronology published there does not claim to be precise, and there are as it happens, considerable difficulties in accepting it as such (though Dr Smith does just this). To begin with, we do not know how Arnett established it, as he never published his sources. Moreover, in 1910 Arnett published another king-list of Zaria which differs considerably from the one in the *Gazetteer*². Dr Smith does indeed refer to this earlier list,³ but must have decided not to use it. Finally it is the case that Arnett's lists are only two among several which have been published from time to time. There are, for example, the lists recovered by W.B. Baikie,⁴ C. H. Robinson,⁵ F. Edgar,⁶ and the old Zaria Translation Bureau.⁷ One of the interesting things about these lists is that they are all different, both from each other and from those of Arnett. For the study of Zaria's political history in the 19th century, therefore, there is posed the initial problem of discovering just when each Emir reigned.

But this is a problem which, I venture to suggest, Dr Smith has neglected. And if, as a result of this neglect, much of his dating should be wrong (as I believe it is), then it is also possible that his whole thesis with regard to the reasons why political events took place may be wrong in important particulars. For, clearly, political events took place in 19th century Zaria not in isolation from other events, but as an aspect of the total situation in the Caliphate. It is not proposed to

¹ London, 1920, pp. 10-11.

² Journal of the African Society, IX, 34, London, 1910, pp. 166-7.

³ JAH, II, 1, p.89.

⁴ *Notes of a Journey from Bida in Nupe to Kano in Hausa, performed in 1862*. By Dr W. B. Baikie, R. N. Extracted from portions of Dr Baikie's Journals in possession of the Foreign Office, by J. Kirk (Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, 37, London, 1867, p.103).

⁵ *Specimens of Hausa Literature* (Cambridge, 1896), pp.102-7.

⁶ *Northern Nigeria. Historical Notes on Certain Emirates and Tribes* (ed. Burdon, London, 1909), p. 79.

⁷ *Labaran Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, I (Zaria, 1932), p. 44.

follow up the ramifications of this here, but it is necessary to draw attention to the question of defective chronology, as it cannot be gathered from Dr Smith's book that the dating of any of the Emirs may be disputed (with the exception that it is stated that Mallam Musa was appointed in "about" 1804).

Oral tradition is an invaluable source of historical information. But it can be seriously misleading with regard to the chronological framework within which the events it describes took place. The business of the historian is either to establish an unshakeable chronology by all means open to him, or to admit the limitations of his reconstruction.

What steps *can* be taken in establishing a firm dynastic chronology for 19th century Zaria? As always, a beginning must be made by a search for fixed points, and in this connection the following may perhaps be suggested from what documents are at present readily available:

1. The commencement of the Fulani dynasty. The *Gazetteer* places this in 1804. But this is certainly wrong. The way in which the Fulani dynasty was established in Zaria was, in fact, very different from the way in which such dynasties were set up in the other great metropolitan Hausa states. We are fortunate in possessing evidence which is very nearly contemporary on this point, and in an attempt to probe the chronological problem, it may be worth while to set out this evidence in some detail.

The *hijra* of the Shehu to Gudu took place in Dhū-l-qa'da, 1218 (February, 1804).¹ At Gudu he was elected Caliph, and this gave him power to appoint Emirs. But it seems that he did not immediately install such officers to rule the more distant Hausa states of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, etc., as, no doubt, he was initially pre-occupied with matters nearer at hand in Gobir. After five months, however, he moved to Magabci.² That is: in Rabī 11, 1219 (July-August, 1804). He stayed in Magabci during the rains of 1804,³ and it was while he was there that "he wrote to the Kings of (these) our Sudanese countries", notably Kano, Katsina and Zaria.⁴ At this time the ruler of Zaria seems to have been Isiaka Jatau, and he is well known to have been a pious Muslim.⁵ It is not surprising therefore that he accepted the Shehu's appeal, and "repented", as Muhammad Bello puts it. In this he did not follow the lead of Kano and Katsina, who rejected the appeal.⁶ Thus the situation in Zaria did

¹ Muhammad Bello, *Infāq al-Maysur* (ed. Whitting, London, 1951, p. 68); Abdullahi dan Fodio, *Tazyin al-waraqat* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/16; and ed. & trans. Hiskett, Ibadan & Kaduna, forthcoming).

² Gidado dan Laima, *Rawd al-jinan* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/28).

³ *Infāq*, p.84.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.83.

⁵ Arnett in JAS, IX, 34, p.167.

⁶ *Infāq*, p.83.

not yet call for the appointment of a Fulani Emir, and, indeed, later in 1804 we hear that Mallam Musa was in action not against the Habe of Zaria, but against Daura which had allied itself with Kano and Katsina.¹ At the same time it was Isiaka Jatau who mounted the jihad in Zaria, as his own people objected to his acceptance of the Shehu's Caliphate, and, according to Muhammad Bello, "he persisted in this for the rest of his life".² Thus, on the basis of this, it would be reasonable to suggest that from the middle of 1804 to the death of Isiaka Jatau there was in fact a Hausa Emir of Zaria. Isiaka was, however, succeeded by the Sarki Makau who was *not* prepared to pay allegiance to the Shehu, and it was after his accession that action against Zaria became necessary. It is not known precisely how long Makau remained Sarkin Zazzau. But the king-lists seem agreed that he reigned for two years and one month before being driven out by Mallam Musa.³ This would indicate (as we do not know when Isiaka died) that the earliest date at which Mallam Musa could have been established in Zaria is something like Jumāda II, 1221 (August-September, 1806). The Waziri Junaidu states that he was in fact appointed to Zaria in the fourth year of the jihad (1222) or 1807-8,⁴ but his authority for this is not clear. What is certainly possible is that he was appointed on the general wave of victory which followed the sack of Alkalawa and the killing of Sarkin Gobir Yunfa in 1808.⁵ The matter is still a little obscure however, as neither Muhammad Bello nor Abdullahi dan Fodio mention the date of his appointment in their detailed chronicles of these years.⁶ It is particularly remarkable that Muhammad Bello does not include Mallam Musa in his list of the *'umāl* of the eastern provinces given towards the end of *Infāq al-maysur*.⁷ even though this list would not seem to have been compiled earlier than July, 1810.⁸ Again, the earliest known mention of the campaigns carried out by Mallam Musa as Emir of Zaria

¹ *Ibid*, p.97.

² *Ibid*, p. 83. The Waziri Junaidu likens his attitude to that of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius as given in Ibn Ishaq's account of his receipt of an embassy from the Prophet. That is: he accepted the appeal, but was opposed in this by his people (*Daḥt al-multaqatat*, Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/31; *Tarihin Fulani*, Zaria, 1957, p.20).

³ e.g. Baikie, Arnett in JAS, and Translation Bureau.

⁴ *Tarihin Fulani*, p. 23.

⁵ *Infāq*, p.116.

⁶ It is true that Abdullahi's account concerns itself mainly with events in the region of Sokoto. But *Infāq* gives much detail of events in Kano, Katsina and Bauchi, while preserving silence on Zaria.

⁷ p. 190. Listed here are Abu Hamid (Zanfara), Umaru Dallaji (Katsina), Sulaiman (Kano), Yakuba (Bauchi), Ibrahim, (Bornu), Muhammad Manga (Western Bornu) and Buba Yero (Gombe).

⁸ The precise date of *Infāq* is uncertain. The latest date mentioned in the book is Jumada II, 1225 (July, 1810). But there is also mention of a raid against Nupe which may have taken place later in 1225.

refer to the ninth year of the Jihad (1226/1811-12).¹ Thus while the precise date of Mallam Musa's appointment cannot yet be determined on the evidence readily available, it is clear that it was much later than suggested by Arnett in the *Gazetteer*. This would accord with the dating suggested by Baikie's king-list, and with that published earlier by Arnett.

2. The year 1826. On 10th July in that year the explorer Clapperton met "Abdulkrum, the acting governor" of Zaria.² The person referred to appears to have been the Sa'i Abdulkarim who was appointed by Mallam Musa, continued in office under Yamusa and became Emir on the latter's death. Clapperton does not give the name of the Emir in 1826, but does state that "the *late* governor was a native of Foota Bonda" or "Meli". That is: Mallam Musa Bamalle. Thus Yamusa, Mallam Musa's successor, was certainly reigning in 1826.³

3. The period 1843-1854. This was the first twelve years of the reign of Sarkin Musulmi Aliyu Babba, and the last twelve years of the sojourn of the chronicler Alhaji Sa'id in Sokoto.⁴ The latter states that during this period the Emirs Abdulkarim, Hammada and Muhammad Sani of Zaria died.⁵ Too little attention has yet been paid to this chronicle, and it has only been printed in part.⁶ But in fact it is extremely useful, as its author was the respected friend of three Caliphs, and remained very close to the Sokoto court for many years. At the same time, as a stranger from the far west, he was an outside observer, not apparently caught up in the active internal politics of the Sokoto Caliphate.⁷ His account is therefore entitled to some respect, and it contradicts the chronology given in the *Zaria Gazetteer* with regard to the date of the death of Muhammad Sani.

4. The year 1855. Towards the end of this year the explorer Vogel visited Zaria.⁸ His published papers do not tell us who was then the

¹ Abd al-Qadir b. Mustafa, *Rawdat al-afkar* (Ibadan Arabic MSS, 82/18; trans. Palmer, JAS, XV, 59, 1916, p. 271.) which gives the ninth year. The Waziri Junaidu (*Tarihin Fulani*, p. 24) gives the eighth year, but it appears as though he has omitted a year in his short account.

² *Journal of a Second Expedition*.....(London, 1829), p.157.

³ Contrast Baikie, *op. cit.*, p. 95, which gives the impression that Abdalkarim was then Emir.

⁴ *Tedzkiret en-nisian* (ed. Houdas and Benoist Paris, 1899) pp. 188-220.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁶ The printed version deals only with the reigns of Muhammad Bello, Abubakar Atiku and Aliyu Babba. The original MS, however, appears to have contained also a chapter on the reign of the Shehu, as a French translation of this is preserved in the Institut Francais de l'Afrique Noire at Dakar (Fonds Brevié). The whereabouts of the MS from which this translation was made is unknown at present.

⁷ Alhaji da Sa'id appears to have been a native of Macina on the Upper Niger, and probably returned there when he left Sokoto. He was a follower of Al-Hajj 'Umar, the Tijani.

⁸ H. Wagner, *Schilderung der Reisen und Entdeckungen des Dr Eduard Vogel in Central-Afrika*, (Leipzig, 1860), pp.293-4.

Emir. But Baikie, arriving some seven years later, was told that Vogel's visit had taken place during the reign of Abdussalami (Audusallami in Dr Smith's version).¹ This also contradicts the *Gazetteer*, and is more consistent with the other king-lists.

5. The Year 1862. Baikie was in Zaria in May of this year, and states that Abdu (Abdullahi) was then on the throne, having been appointed Emir six years previously.² The chronology of the *Gazetteer*, however, places Abdussalami on the throne in 1862.

6. The year 1885. In September of this year the explorer Staudinger arrived in Zaria, and he tells us that the Emir then reigning was Sambo³.

7. The year 1894. C.H. Robinson was in Zaria during October and November of this year, and states that the then Emir was a "Beriberi".⁴ This would be Yero of the Bornawa.

8. The year 1903. As Dr Smith points out, this was the year in which Lugard finally deposed the Emir Kwassau (in April).

These fixed points are at present the only readily available references by which we may attempt a criticism of the published king-lists. A glance at the accompanying table* will show the extent of the inaccuracies in the latter which are thus disclosed. On the basis of this data it is certainly possible to suggest a provisional 'optimum' chronology appropriate to the present state of our knowledge. But the material used would still be king-lists which are not contemporary documents throughout, and are liable to incorporate errors which cannot yet be checked by any facts at our disposal. Lists which are reliable in part may obviously be inaccurate elsewhere. Even when all lists agree on certain dating, this may be nothing more than an indication of their derivation from a common unreliable source.

This means that much further work remains to be done before a final dynastic chronology for 19th century Zaria can be established. But it does not mean that any insuperable difficulty is necessarily involved here. For a very wide field of enquiry still remains unexplored. Two promising lines of investigation, indeed, present themselves immediately. First, there may well be important information to be gleaned from the colophons of books copied in Zaria during this period. It was sometimes the custom of copyists not only to date their copies, but also to indicate the name of the ruler in office when a particular copy was made. Some colophons even refer to important events which took place in the year of the copy, or indicate which year of the ruler's reign this was. Admittedly up to the present nothing of this nature seems to have come

¹ JRGS, 37, 1867, p.95.

² *Ibid.*, p.103.

³ P. Staudinger, *Im Herzender Hausaland*, (Berlin, 1889), p. 200.

⁴ *Hausaland* (London, 1896), p.83.

* Printed on the reverse of page 283

to light for Fulani Zaria, but here is certainly something which must be closely investigated.¹ Secondly, it is likely that a study of the official correspondence of the Fulani Emirs of Zaria and elsewhere may prove useful. Unfortunately the Fulani Emirs and their officials were not in the habit of dating their correspondence. But reference in the letters to events which are dateable from other sources may prove fruitful for the chronological record. No study of Zaria's official correspondence has yet been made.²

It cannot be too often emphasised that the establishment of chronologies of this type is slow and difficult work. But it is of first class importance. Far too much of an unsatisfactory nature has already been published about Northern Nigeria in this field, and it is time that the whole question of dynastic chronology in that region is reconsidered.³ For without a basis in authenticated chronology, the full potentialities of historical study cannot be realised.

¹ It is believed that Mallam Sulaiman, present Emir of Abuja, preserves manuscripts with useful notes of this nature from Habe Zaria, and there is every reason to believe that similar texts from Fulani Zaria may eventually be recovered.

² The only published example of such correspondence from before the time of the Emir Kwassau appears to be a letter from the Emir Sambo to Sidi Umaru, 'amil of Keffi (lithographed in Staudinger, *op. cit.*, p.743).

³ Cf. H. F. C. Smith, *A Fragment on 18th Century Katsina* (Bulletin of the Historical Society of Nigeria, V, 4, pp. 4-6); and *A Further Adventure in the Chronology of Katsina* (*ibid*, VI, 1, 1961, pp. 5-7).

Translation
Bureau¹ Arnett (JAS).¹ Arnett (Gaz)

MUSA	12y 10m (1224-1236) (1809-1821)	?	c. 14y	12y 10m (1224-1236) (18092-1821)	10y 1m (1230-1240) (18155-1825)	c.18045-1821
YAMUSA	14y 10m (1236-1251) (1821-1836)	3y	c. 13y	14y 10m (1236-1251) (1821-1835/6)	14y 10m (1240-1255) (1825-1839)	c.1821-1834
ABDULKARIM	11y 5m (1251-1263) (1836-1847)	?	c. 12y	11y 5m (1251-1263) (1835/6-1847)	11y 5m. (1255-1266) (1839-1850)	c.1834-1846
HAMMADA	53 days (1263) (1847)	53 days ³	c. 52 days	53days (1263) (1847)	53days (1266-1267) (1850)	c.1846
MUHD. SANI	7y 3m (1263-1270) (1847-1854)	9y	c. 14y	7y 3m (1263-1270) (1847-1854)	7y 3m (1267-1274) (1850-1857/85)	c.1846-1860 ⁵
SIDI	10m (1270-1271) (1854-1855)	?	c. 9m	9m (1270-1271) (1854-1854/5)	9m (1274-1275) (1857/85-18585)	c.1860 ⁵
ABDUSSALAMI	1y 7m (1271-1273) (1855-1856)	9m	c. 3y	1y 7m (1271-1272) (1854/5-1856)	1y 7m (1275-1276) (18585-1860)	c.1860 ⁵ -1863 ⁵

ABDULLAHI	(1273- (1856-	14y	c. 15y	14y 8m (1272-1287) (1856-1870)	14y 8m (1276-1291) (1860-1874)	c.18635-1873
ABUBAKAR		2y 5m	c. 3y	2y 10m (1287-1290) (1870-1873)	2y 10m 1291-1294) (1874-1877)	c.1873-1876
ABDULLAHI		5y 5m	c. 5y	5y 7m (1290-1295) (1873-1878)	1y 7m (1294-1295) (1877-1878)	c.1876-1881
SAMBO		9y 6m ?	c. 9y	9y 9m (1295-1304) (1878-1887)	9y 9m (1295-1305) (1878-1888)	c.1881-1890
YERO			c. 9y	9y 7m (1304-1314) (1887-1896)	9y 4m (1305-1314) (1888-1897)	c.1890-1897
KWASSAU			c. 6y	6y (1314-1320) (1896-19024)	6y 2m (1314-1321) (1897-1903)	c.1897-1903

NOTES ON THE TABLE

- 1 The figures in brackets are merely approximate dates inferred from the reign-lengths given in the lists.
- 2 Arnett actually gives 1808. But it is not clear how he arrives at this figure.
- 3 This list actually places Hammada after Sidi.
- 4 Kwassau was deposed in 1903. But Arnett regards his reign as having ended in 1902, as he was 'suspended' in that year.
- 5 This date is clearly wrong if the fixed points on pages 3-7 above are accepted.

BOOK REVIEWS

A SHORT HISTORY OF BENIN—Jacob Egharevba. 3rd edition. *Ibadan University Press*, 1960. pp.xii+101. 8s. 6d.

ALTHOUGH the body of documentary evidence for Nigerian history is already impressive and continues to grow, by far the greater part of the information from which we have to reconstruct and interpret the past exists only in the chronicles of states, dynasties, families, towns and individuals entrusted to the memory of succeeding generations. At different levels, and particularly at the level of the state, elaborate arrangements were usually made to ensure the preservation of the traditions deemed important for the body concerned. In Benin, for example, Esekhurhe, the priest of the royal ancestors, was charged with memorising the king-list so that he might properly perform the sacrifices to past Obas. Of course, a knowledge of the past preserved orally could not be given a definitive form, but was subject to deliberate and accidental reshaping. Over the last century, however, some part of these oral chronicles have been fixed in writing; at first mainly by Europeans out of curiosity or for purposes of their own, more recently by Nigerians inspired by a pride in the past. Very few such records achieve the mechanical perfection desired by modern research techniques, but they are of great importance, partly because they usually present a version older than any obtainable from present-day informants, and also because oral history once recorded must probably lose much of its virtue. The record will tend to standardise the surviving oral forms and inhibit further development.

Chief Egharevba's book is one of the few outstanding records of oral history. The sources of his information are not revealed, but Dr Bradbury writes in the introduction that it was collected some thirty years ago from informants who had themselves received it before the fall of the Benin kingdom in 1897. Since the work was first published in 1934 it has become the authoritative version of Benin history among the Benin people themselves as well as for all those interested in Benin: the book now dominates tradition. It is not, however, based solely on oral tradition, for the author has carefully incorporated information from printed sources which have clearly exercised considerable influence on his use of the oral material. For example, the Idah war, which tradition associates with the reign of Esigie, has been dated to 1515-16 because Portuguese missionaries are known to have accompanied an Oba on a campaign during those years. This consideration may also have influenced Egharevba in changing the date of Esigie's accession to 1504 from 1520 given by Talbot. Continuing research will inevitably lead to modifications in any synthesis of oral and documentary material, but this book will retain a permanent value as the major record of Benin traditional history, and the historian is likely to be continually

surprised at the verifiable accuracy of Chief Egharevba's information.

Too often works of this kind suffer from appalling editing, printing and production: the present volume sets a new standard more worthy of its subject. The cover engraving of Benin City, though attractive, may mislead the reader unaware that it was not the work of a visitor to the city, but of an illustrator who relied solely upon the description given in Dapper.

A. F. C. Ryder

A SKETCH-MAP HISTORY OF WEST AFRICA—Norah Latham: *Hulton Educ. Press* . 7s. 6d.

THE author claims that this book is meant to supply the need of the middle form of secondary schools for "a summary of the most important developments" in the history of West Africa. In the first place, the educational value of this kind of summary is extremely doubtful. In the second place, what is described as a summary cannot afford the slightest departure from accuracy, nor indulge in worn-out assumptions.

In chapter 2, there is the suggestion that the "races" of West Africa can be neatly categorised as "whites", "negros" and "pure negros.". A neat division of this kind, fashionable in the past, ignores the extreme intermingling which must have taken place, especially when the Sahara was not the human 'divide' it seems to be today. Descriptive Characteristics of race there are, but, as Professor Murdock rightly says, "traditional typologies" are not "particularly respectable from the scientific point of view".

Also, recent language studies do not necessarily support the theory that the negroes "came from the east", indigenous traditions of origin notwithstanding. The most serious inaccuracy in this book is, however, the categorical statement that the empires of the Western Sudan were ruled "by a white race". This statement is no more than a repetition of the now discredited "Hamitic myth" which insinuated that indigenous negroes were incapable of large-scale political organisation. It is now accepted by sociologists and historians that the decisive factor in evolution and cultural development in Africa, as elsewhere, was environmental, not racial.

A summary of developments in the history of West Africa for schools in West Africa should not talk about barriers to civilisation as if no civilisations had been indigenously created and sustained before the slave trade produced chaos where before there was orderly government and cultural creativeness. Emphasis on the latter has historical value for West African students—certainly more than the story of European partition.

Two things can be commended in the book by Miss Latham. The maps are very useful and informative. Also, the questions at the end of the book should prove useful to secondary school teachers for the purpose of revision of a fuller course of West African history which the book does not claim to have provided.

J. C. Anene

THIS book is, to say the least, a stimulating starting point for further research into the origins of Africa's civilisations. As Davidson acknowledges, it is "a sort of 'situation report' on many and exciting finds". This assessment is however an understatement.

In the first place, it can be claimed that the book puts a finishing touch to the discomfiture of the old tradition of African historical writing. This tradition was based on the prejudiced and superficial assumption that indigenous Africa had no past worthy of the curiosity of Scholarship. The worst distortion of this tradition took the form of attempting to explain away the irrefutable archaeological evidence of indigenous African civilisations. For instance, the ruins at great Zimbabwe were denied their indigenous growth and attributed to "native workmen under the direction of a 'superior' alien race or supervisor" or perhaps, as was also glibly assumed "maritime Phoenicians, Arab captains and their slender bands were those who built the island cities, dwelt in them and disappeared—leaving the local savages to copy crudely what remained, and continue a debased tradition which had not been African".

As is to be expected, and as avowed by the author, no final answer is vouchsafed for the manifold questions raised in the book about the origins and unities of Africa's past civilisations.

In view of the unequal value and nature of archaeological work so far attempted, often not systematically, in widely separate areas of Africa, a book which attempts to present a clear account of our existing knowledge and stimulate further research cannot be expected to be complete or definitive.

On the positive side, it can be stated categorically that on the evidence of Arab writers, the Sudan States of West Africa and the "Azanian" civilization of East Africa can stand comparison in civilisation with Medieval Europe. Davidson's reference to Mare Block's study of European feudalism is used to explain a baffling phenomenon. Why did Europe progress while Africa apparently slumbered? From the immunity of Europe from outside invasions, "there came the chance of a cultural and social evolution that was much more regular, and was immune from the damage of outside attack or the submerging flood of foreign migration....." For Africa, on the other hand, first by the Portuguese intervention and then by the nomad invasions from the north, Africa "slides easily and grimly into a wholesale traffic in human flesh for sale and export".

Old Africa Rediscovered is fundamentally a challenge to Scholarship, particularly African Scholarship. Who were the ancestors of African peoples? What were the exact lines of migration? What were precisely the points of growth and irradiation of indigenous Africa's civilising ideas and technology?

The assumption, hitherto, was of a one-way traffic from the north to the south. This assumption ignored the complexity of social growth.

For this reason, the oft-repeated local legends of an eastern or a northern origin current among many groups in Nigeria and elsewhere require more profound scrutiny than has so far been attempted. As Davidson rhetorically asks, were the strong and vigorous peoples of the forest belt the mere product of migration from the northward? In any case, the inconclusiveness of the superficial method of drawing far-reaching conclusions, as to origins, from the mere identification of unconnected parallels of custom and so on has rightly been stressed by Professor Murdock, in his book on Africa Culture history.

Apart from the many questions left unanswered (for this the author is clearly not accountable), there is one criticism that ought to be made. This is an out-of-date assumption that a moral hierarchy exists as regards centralised political organisations and what are usually described as segmented societies. The work of social anthropologists has shown clearly that there are no objective criteria for sustaining such a gradation.

This slight criticism cannot, however, detract from the stupendous value of this book. At a time when Africa is extricating itself from servitude, it is of great importance that it should be asserted that Africa's past was not just "the void of a motionless past", and that in every sphere of endeavour, Africa had made, and will continue to make, her own contribution to the common culture of humanity.

J. C. Anene

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